# 4A Action

# Credentialing and Certificated Assignments Committee

**Application for Eminence Credential** 

Executive Summary: The Governing Board of Pacific Community Charter High School is recommending to the Commission to issue an Eminence Credential to Carolyn Cooke in the subject of English: Writing and Literature

Recommended Action: None

Presenter: Nancy Passaretti, Associate Governmental Program Analyst

Strategic Plan Goal: 1

Promote educational excellence through the preparation and certification of professional educators

Sustain high quality standards for the preparation of professional educators

### **Application For Eminence Credential**

#### Introduction

The Governing Board of Pacific Community Charter High School, Point Arena, California, Mendocino County, by resolution, adopted on January 26, 2005, in accordance with Education Code Section 44262, a recommend to the Commission to issue a credential based on Eminence to Carolyn Cooke in the subject of English: Writing and Literature.

#### Background

The purpose of the Eminence Credential is to provide for the issuance of a teaching credential in the unusual circumstance where an individual who is so eminent in their field that they will compensate for their lack of a teacher preparation program by their exceptional knowledge and renown in the subject matter of their expertise.

In accordance with Education Code Section 44262, the Commission may issue an Eminence Credential to any person who has achieved eminence in a field of endeavor taught or service practiced in the public schools of California.

The employing school district's responsibility is to validate the individual's ability to teach during the first two years of the individual's assignment. During that time, the individual is only authorized to teach for the requesting school district and such employment must be in the field where the individual has established their expertise.

California Code of Regulations, Title 5, Section 80043(a) defines an eminent individual as one who is recognized as such beyond the boundaries of his or her community, has demonstrably advanced his or her field, and has been acknowledged by his or her peers beyond the norm for others in the specific endeavor.

The judgment of whether an individual merits the awarding of an Eminence Credential includes a degree of subjectivity, however, both the statute and the regulation set a high bar, requiring the individual applicant to have reached a position of prominence within their field. The Commission is the final authority in granting an eminence credential and an eminence application that appears to meet the criteria does not guarantee that the Commission will award the eminence credential.

The following criteria is used to consider whether or not an individual has submitted sufficient evidentiary material to support eminence and be brought forth to the Commission for review.

- The individual is recognized as eminent beyond the boundaries of his or her community: To meet this requirement the individual must be renown outside his geographical community with more merit given to interstate and international recognition.
- Demonstrably advanced his or her field: To meet this requirement an individual must provide documentation of advanced degrees; distinguished employment in the field or endeavor; contributions to the field including evidence of authorship or research indicating a high level of expertise.
- Acknowledged by his or her peers beyond the norm for others in the specific endeavor:
   To meet this requirement the employing agency must submit all of the following:
  - Letters from former employers, professional colleagues and other experts in the field, relating to the individual's recognized expertise or position of prominence in their field
  - 2) Documents evidencing extraordinary ability worthy of distinction
  - 3) Evidence of major, national or international awards recognizing uncommon achievement in and advancement of a particular field or endeavor.
  - 4) Evidence of significant contribution to the field.
  - Authorship of a new or unusually successful method of educating children or the public in the field or endeavor
  - 6) Extraordinary success in their field

Evidentiary Materials Presented By Carolyn Cooke	Recognized Beyond Boundaries	Advances Field	Acknowledged by Peers as Beyond the Norm			
Awa	ards		1.734,200			
"The O'Henry Awards Prize Stories" Best of 1997, Carolyn Cooke, "The Twa Corbies"	√	1	√			
"The O'Henry Awards Prize Stories" - Best of 1998, Carolyn Cooke "Eating Dirt"	√	<b>V</b>	1			
National Endowment For The Arts 1998, Creative Writing Fellowship Grant in Literature, \$20,000.00	√	√	<b>V</b>			
PEN/Bingham Awards, May 2002 at Lincoln Center, \$70,000.00	√	1	<b>√</b>			
Nomination Letter from Heidi Pitlor, Editor	<b>√</b>	V	<b>√</b>			
Hemingway Foundation/PEN Award for First Fiction 2002, Runner-Up for "Bostons"	1	1	<b>V</b>			
L.L. Winship/PEN New England Award 2002 Finalist for "Bostons"	√	√	√			
California Arts Council 2002 Artists Fellowship Award \$5000.00	√	√	1			
Massachusetts Book Awards 2002 Award in Fiction	√	√	√			
Rev	iews					
Book Review, New York Times June 2001 for the "Bostons"	1	1				
Notable Books of 2001 - The New York Times, for the "Bostons"	√	√				
Best Books of 2001 – Los Angeles Times for the "Bostons"	√	√				
San Diego Union-Tribune 2002 Review	<b>√</b>	1				
Let	ters					
Letter from Kate Walbert, Author			V			
Letter from Ben Sonnenberg, Writer/Editor			1			
Letter from Bruce Bawer, Author			V			
Letter from Brian Bouldrey, Author, Assistant Professor in creative writing at Northwestern University, Director of Northwestern's Master Program in Creative Writing			√ ·			
Letter from Brettne Bloom, Literary Agent, The Hill and Barlow Agency			√			

Staff has substantiated the following evidentiary material submitted by Pacific Community Charter School and Carolyn Cooke, and categorized it into the three required areas deemed necessary to support an eminence application.

Evidentiary Materials Presented By Carolyn Cooke	Recognized Beyond Boundaries	Advances Field	Acknowledged by Peers as Beyond the Norm
Educ	ation		13.54.00
Bachelor of Arts Degree in English 1980 Smith College, Massachusetts		<b>√</b>	
Master of Fine Arts Degree in Writing 1986 Columbia University, New York		<b>V</b>	
Written Stories and B	ook by Caroly	n Cooke	
"The Fungus is Among Us" 2003, an essay written by Carolyn Cooke	1	1	
"Best American Short Stories" 2002, Carolyn Cooke, "The Sugar Tit"	1	<b>V</b>	
"Bostons" Stories By Carolyn Cooke, 2001, Mariner/Houghton Mifflin	√	1	
"Ploughshares" at Emerson College 1999, Carolyn Cooke "The Mourning Party"	√	1	
"The O'Henry Awards" Prize Stories" Best of 1998, Carolyn Cooke "Eating Dirt"	√	√	
"The Best American Short Stories" 1997, Carolyn Cooke "Bob Darling"	√	1	
"The O'Henry Awards Prize Stories" Best of 1997, Carolyn Cooke, "The Twa Corbies"	√	<b>√</b>	
"New England Review" 1997, Carolyn Cooke, "Eating Dirt"	√	√	
"The Gettysburg Review 1996, Carolyn Cooke, "Twa Corbies"	√	√	
"Breaking Up is Hard to Do" Stories by Women 1994, Carolyn Cooke, "Mum and the Planet Earth"	<b>√</b>	V	
"The Nation" Book Reviews by Carolyn Cook, 1990 and 1991	√	√	
"Story Quarterly 21" Stories from the Gordon Lish Workshops 1986, Carolyn Cooke, "What It Comes Down To	√	V	
"The Paris Review" 1986, Carolyn Cooke "Bob Darling"	√	<b>√</b>	

Evidentiary Materials Presented By Carolyn Cooke	Recognized Beyond Boundaries	Advances Field	Acknowledged by Peers as Beyond the Norm
Fellowships as	nd Residencies		
Northwestern University Writer-in Residence, Evanston, Illinois March 2004	1	1	
	rience		
Avenue Magazine, Inc., Managing Editor		1	
On The Avenue, Writer, 1986		V	
Research and Editorial Assistant to journalist, Alexander Cockburn (1992-1996)		1	
Humanities and Writing Teacher (Grades 9- 12) Waring School, Beverly, Massachusetts (1989-1992)		√	
New College of California, Faculty Member		V	
Letter from Edie Meidav, Director of the Writing and Consciousness Program at New College of California		<b>V</b>	
Founder and Director, Point Arena Arts and Lecture Series, a project of the PEN American Center, The Arena Renaissance Company and the Pacific Community Charter School, funded by PEN		V	
Article on Ca	arolyn Cooke		
"Class Writer" by John Beck, An Article on Carolyn Cooke, The Press Democrat, Santa Rosa California		V	
Educational (	Contributions		
Letter from James G. Watras, Assistant Headmaster Waring School Massachusetts,		1	
Article in the Redwood Coast Review, "Rethinking School, Let kids be volunteers, not captives"		V	
Founding Member and Teacher at Pacific Community Charter School (K-12)		√	
Professiona	Affiliations		
Authors' Guild	√	1	
PEN	V	V	

The following information is the actual documentation of the items categorized above.

#### EMINENCE

The laws and regulations which concern Eminence Credentials are quoted below.

Education Code Section 44262 gives the broad authorizations and term of the Eminence Credential:

#### § 44262. Eminence credential

Upon the recommendation of the governing board of a school district, the commission may issue an eminence credential to any person who has achieved eminence in a field of endeavor taught or service practiced in the public schools of California. This credential shall authorize teaching or the performance of services in the public schools in the subject or subject area or service and at the level or levels approved by the commission as designated on the credential.

Each credential so issued shall be issued initially for a two-year period and may be renewed a three-year period by the commission upon the request of the governing board of the school district. Upon completion of the three-year renewal period, the holder of an eminence credential shall be eligible upon application for a professional clear teaching credential.

(Stats. 1976, c.1010, § 2, operative April 30, 1977. Amended by Stats. 1996, c.1067 (S.B.1924), § 7.)

#### § 80043. Statement of Employment and Verification of Qualifications.

- (a) When considering an application for an Eminence Credential, the Commission shall be guided by the following definition of an eminent individual: The eminent individual is recognized as such beyond the boundaries of his or her community, has demonstrably advanced his or her field and has been acknowledged by his or her peers beyond the norm for others in the specific endeavor. The employing school district shall demonstrate how the eminent individual will enrich the educational quality of the school district and not how he or she will fill an employment need.
- (b) Pursuant to Section 44262 of the Education Code, issuance of an Eminence Credential shall be based upon a recommendation from the governing board of the school district, a statement of employment, submission of the fee(s) established in Section 80487 and a verification of the applicant's eminence qualifications.
  - (1) The Statement of Employment in the district shall include the proposed assignment of the credential applicant, and a certification of the intention of the district to employ the applicant if granted an Eminence Credential.
  - (2) The verification of eminence qualifications of an applicant for an Eminence Credential shall include:
    - (A) Recommendations, which may be from, but need not be limited to, the following: professional associations; former employers, professional colleagues; any other individuals or groups whose evaluations would support eminence; and
    - (B) Documentation of achievement, which may include, but need not be limited to, the following: advanced degrees earned; distinguished employment; evidence of related study or experience; publications; professional achievement; and recognition attained for contributions to his or her field of endeavor.
  - (3) The Commission shall provide notice to the public of those individuals for whom it is considering issuing Eminence Credentials. Any association, group, or individual may provide the Commission with a written statement regarding the qualifications of an individual under consideration for an Eminence Credential.
- (c) The Commission may assign certification staff the authority to review eminence applications to determine if an individual meets the definition of eminence pursuant to Section 44262 of the Education Code and (a) above.
  - If staff concludes an applicant meets the definition, staff shall forward the application to the Commission for review and action
    at the next available meeting.
  - (2) If staff concludes an applicant does not meet the definition, staff shall deny the application.
    - (A) If the staff denies an application for enumence, the employing school district requesting the Eminence Credential may request the Commission to a review the staff decision.
    - (B) If the Commission takes action to hear the school district's application, it will be scheduled for a subsequent meeting when the Commission votes to grant or deny the Eminence Credential.

NOTE: Authority Cited: Section 44225, Education Code: Reference: Section 44262, Education Code

#### § 80044. Scope of Eminence.

A person may obtain an Eminence Credential if the subject or service in which the work is determined to exhibit eminence is one which a school board wishes to have taught or practiced in its district. NOTE: Authority Cited: Section 44225, Education Code.

#### § 80045. Renewal of Eminence Credential.

- (a) The Commission staff shall renew an Eminence Credential for three years upon receipt of an application for renewal with a written statement of support from the governing board of the school district adopted in a public meeting and submission of the fee(s) established in Section 80487
- (b) The Commission staff shall issue a Professional Clear Eminence Teaching Credential at the end of five years of possession of the Eminence Credential with a written statement of support from the governing board of the school district adopted in a public meeting, submission of an application and the fee established in Section 80487.

NOTE: Authority cited: Section 44225, Education Code. Reference: Section 44262, Education Code.



Telephone. (916) 445-7254 or (888) 921-2682 E-mail: credentials@ctc.ca.gov Web site: www.ctc.ca.gov

#### RECOMMENDATION FOR A PERSON OF EMINENCE

The Governing Board of thePacific Co	ommunity Charter	School	
school district, by resolution adopted on	January 26, 2	Date	, in accordance
with California Education Code, Section 442	62, recommends the	W-7711 W	al based on Eminence to
Carolyn Cooke			
Name			
in the subject of EnglishWriting	J & Literature		
Eminence was determined on the basis of _			
-recognition as eminent beyond the	e boundaries of	her community for	fiction
writing			
-demonstrable advancement in her publications, and distinguis	The state of the s	vanced degrees,	
-acknowledgment by a national circ	cle of critical	peers as beyond t	he norm
for others in the specific e	ndeavor of fiction	on writing	
The above named applicant will be employed	I in this school distric	t to serve as a	
teacher	at the	secondary	level.
Teacher/Subject, Administrator, other		Elementary or	Secondary
Governance Council Chair			
District Superintendent:			
Date: January 26, 2005			
See page 2 for additional required informati	on.		
			(continue

	The following affirmations of eminence are attached:
	best seller lists
	-awards
	-book reviews
	-letters, articles, and presentation speeches regarding the applicant
	The following documentation of achievement (advanced degrees, distinguished employment, publications other) are attached:
	-advanced degrees
	-record of employment in schools and colleges
	-record of instruction at writers workshops and conferences
	-record of publications and publication awards
7	Designed high school writing workshop model in which even reluctant writers write. Results include -Publication of student literary journal.  Commaling, -Winning Poetry Slam presentations, and -Student publications in county and state anthologies.
	Designed model PEN American Center visiting author series for youth.
1	isiting authors included Serman Alexie, Quincy Troupe, and Jane Hirshfield.
	Attached are the following miscellaneous items the district feels support eminence:
	PEN American Center PEN/Robert Bingham Fellowship
	-National Endowment for the Arts fellowship
	-California Arts Council fellowship
	-Articles and flyers from PEN visiting author series
	Attached is a letter from the applicant describing his or her accomplishments that support a claim of

#### Carolyn Cooke P.O. Box 462 25524 Ten Mile Cutoff Point Arena, California 95468

January 25, 2005

Ms. Edye Ipsaro California Commission on Teacher Credentialing Box 944270 1900 Capitol Avenue Sacramento, California 94244-2700

Dear Ms. Ipsaro,

Attached please find my application for an Eminence Credential in the state of California. I am currently employed at an Instructor in the Graduate Writing Program at New College of California's San Francisco Campus. I also teach creative writing at Pacific Community Charter School in Point Arena, California, a K-12 school I helped to found in 1999 and for which I wrote the original draft charter.

My primary work - and my only possible claim to "eminence" - is as a writer of fiction. My first collection of short stories, The Bostons, was published by Houghton Mifflin Company in 2001. This book won a major award from the PEN American Center in New York (a two-year, \$70,000 grant for an "outstanding first work of fiction"). It appeared on both the New York Times and the Los Angeles Times "Notable" / "Best" Books of the year lists, was a finalist for the PEN/Hemingway Award and the PEN New England/Winship Award, and was named an Honor Book by the Massachusetts Center for the Book. The Bostons was widely and favorably reviewed in the New York Times (both in the weekday edition and the Sunday Book Review), in the Los Angeles Times, the Boston Globe, New York Newsday, the Washington Times and other publications around the country. It appeared on the Los Angeles Times "Best Seller" list for several weeks in a row in the summer of 2001, and on the Boston Globe best seller list for one week. My short stories have appeared in several volumes of Best American Short Stories and Prize Stories: The O.Henry Awards, as well as in journals such as the Paris Review, New England Review, Ploughshares, the Idaho Review and the Gettysburg Review. My first novel, Daughters of the Revolution, is under contract with Houghton Mifflin, scheduled for publication next year. A feature story on my work by John Beck is forthcoming in the Santa Rosa Press Democrat. My work has also been featured on National Public Radio.

For the past three years I have taught writing at Pacific Community Charter School as a community mentor. My students are all writers of some accomplishment. All have books that include ten to over a hundred original works. The books have titles, covers, back cover biographies, and author photos.

## **Pacific Community Charter School**

10 Lake Street \* PO Box 984 \* Point Arena, CA 95468 \* (707) 882-4131 \* fax (707) 882-4132 pccs@@ mcn.org

January 26, 2005

California Commission on Teacher Credentialing Box 944270 1900 Capitol Avenue Sacramento, CA 94244-2700

Re: Carolyn Cooke

**Eminence Credential Application** 

Statement of Employment

Dear Members of the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing:

This is to verify the intention of Pacific Community Charter School to employ Ms. Carolyn Cooke as a teacher at the secondary level to teach students enrolled from grades nine through twelve in our High School Program in the assigned subject of English with an emphasis of Creative Writing and Literature.

Sincerely,

Rick Barton, Chair Governance Council

BAST

## **Pacific Community Charter High School**

200 Lake Street \* PO Box 984 \* Point Arena, CA 95468 \* (707) 882-2298 \* fax (707) 882-4132 pccshigh@@ mcn.org

January 26, 2005

California Commission on Teacher Credentialing 1900 Capitol Avenue Sacramento, CA 94244-2700

Re: Carolyn Cooke

**Eminence Credential** 

How this individual will enrich the educational experience of the school district.

Dear Members of the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing

Ms. Carolyn Cooke is a gem of the Mendocino Coast. She is a best selling author of fiction, a recipient of the of the prestigious PEN/Robert Bingham Fellowship for Writers, a National Endowment for the Arts fellowship, a California Arts Council fellowship, and numerous awards.

While maintaining a demanding schedule of writing, and college teaching, she has made time to give to the youth of our small, isolated, rural town. As a Community Mentor, she has coordinated our high school creative writing program for two years. In her Forms of Writing workshop, even reluctant writers find they have a story to tell and the voice with which to tell it. The workshop format she designed slips youth into the heart of great writing and into their own writing heart. She builds community and then models how community listens and encourages. Within this community and the pressure cooker of time (sometimes only ten minutes), young people find themselves writing and writing well, even fearlessly exploring the sonnet, the pantoum, or lines of iambic pentameter.

Through her mentorship, youth have begun to think of themselves as writers who happen also to be students. They have published their own literary journal, *Tourmaline*. They have received highest scores at Poetry Slam readings. They have been published in the selective California Poets In the Schools state anthology. One student, as a special project, completed a 193 page novel. Another student is actively pursuing publication of her novel for young adults, including meeting with a literary agent.

In addition to her writing workshop for PCCHS students, Ms. Cooke coordinated the PEN American Center visiting author series which brought to our coast Sherman Alexie, Quincy Troupe, Jane Hirshfield, Willie Perdomo and Luis Urrea for free public readings and an intimate writers workshop for local students. This meeting of artist, community and youth has been recognized as a model of artistic exchange by PEN American Center.

Ms. Carolyn Cooke will enrich our educational experience as she has enriched this community through her commitment, her passion and the quest for excellence in each of us.

Sincerely,

Yolanda Highhouse

Director

Two of my students have written novels as part of our school's project-based passages program; several are working on chapbooks of poetry. Most of them perform on the Mendocino County poetry slam team. Half of them have had poetry published in various anthologies around the state. All of them have published in our school literary magazine, Tourmaline. I have considerable teaching experience, having taught middle school in the public system in Weston, Massachusetts, and at a private prep school in Beverly, Massachusetts, for four years. Currently I'm on the faculty at New College of California, where I teach Critical Theory and an advanced fiction workshop for MFA students, and oversee four MA thesis projects. I have written on educational issues, politics and literature for publications including The Nation, Contemporary Literary Criticism, the Redwood Coast Review, the Independent Coast Observer and the Anderson Valley Advertiser. I am well-known in my community (the south coast of Mendocino) as a passionate advocate for effective and inspired public education. I served for four years on the Arena School Board, have been a director of the Acorn School in Point Arena, and currently serve on the Governance Council of Pacific Community Charter School. I am pursuing the Eminence Credential in hopes that it will help me to serve my community using expertise I already possess. Although teaching is not at the core of my profession, it is close to my heart.

Thank you for your kind consideration.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Cooke

Carolyn Cooke P.O. Box 462 25524 Ten Mile Cutoff Point Arena, California 95468 707-882-2106 redtag@mcn.org

February 10, 2005

Ms. Edye Ipsaro California Commission on Teacher Credentialing Box 944270 1900 Capitol Avenue Sacramento, California 94244-2700

Dear Ms. Ipsaro,

Thank you for calling this morning. I enjoyed speaking with you and it was helpful to hear what kind of evidence you need. As we agreed, I'm enclosing volumes and a CD highlighting my publishing history. The O. Henry Awards Prize Stories and Best American Short Stories are chosen from respected literary magazines and judged by the eminent author-editors of these volumes to represent the best American short fiction of the year. I've submitted these as evidence of "acknowledgment from peers beyond the norm."

Regarding letters from authors attesting to accomplishments in my field "beyond the norm," I think the most eloquent of these are the blurbs from the front and back covers of my book from Kate Walbert (A National Book Award Finalist in 2004), Deborah Weisgall, author of A Joyful Noise, Diane Leslie, author of Fleur de Leigh's Life of Crime, and Madison Smartt Bell, the acclaimed author of over a dozen novels and story collections. I'd also point to the citations from author judges in the PEN/Bingham Award, the PEN/Hemingway Award, and the PEN New England/L.L. Winship Award. These citations are public "letters" attesting to the quality of my work from such writers as Rick Moody (author of Demonology, Purple America and The Minister's Black Veil) and Sue Miller (bestselling author of A Good Mother and ten other novels). They have been read at ceremonies for the above awards at the Kennedy Library in Boston and at Lincoln Center in New York. Other letters submitted on my behalf are from Ben Sonnenberg, the founder and editor emeritus of the award-winning literary magazine Grand Street and author of the memoir Lost Property; Edie Meiday, a Fulbright Scholar and author of the Kafka Prize-winning The Far Field: A Novel of Ceylon; and Bruce Bawer, author of A Place at the Table and Stealing Jesus.

I'm also including evidence of my work as Managing Editor at Avenue Magazine in New York in the early 1980s, samples of reviews I wrote for The Nation in the early 1990s that were reprinted a couple of years ago in Contemporary Literary Criticism, and a copy of my academic transcript from Columbia University, which arrived too late to include with my original application.

# THE FUNGUS IS AMONG US

ABANDONING THE SIXTH SENSE—AND EMBRACING COLD HARD SCIENCE— IN THE MUSHROOM-HEAVY MENDOCINO WINTER BY CAROLYN COOKE

once took a pregnancy lest in Aix en Provence. The instructions, though written in French, were clear. A moistened slip of litmus paper would turn either bleu or rouge, indicating the range of possibilities between baby and no baby. Rooting for bleu, I waited with a primal, transforming lust, my sensibility stained by what I hoped was intuition. My litmus bled a defiant rouge, a bit, I thought, on the bleu side.

"It is a sad comment on our times that intuition is so often peddled as a substitute for critical observation." writes David Arora, whose lusciously readable fungus hunter's bible. Mushrooms Demystified, offers a 900-plus-page antidote to sloppy thinking. I agree, which is why every winter, when the rains come to Northern California and the woods fill up with bulbous boletes and hideous gomphidius, I take Arora's book and my son (the happy result of a different pregnancy test) to mushroom camp.

"Camp" is a former commune in Mendocino County, nestled in the cleavage between ridges of redwood and pine. Every year it draws an odd mix of Latin scholars, hardy enviro types, weekend chefs, artists interested in dyeing and papermaking, and people like my son and me, who want to find out what's growing out by the woodshed.

We arrive to find a table outside the common kitchen already heavy with fungus: purple blewits (Clitocybe nuda), candy caps (Lactorius fragilis), and matsutakes (Armillaria ponderosa), whose fragrant musk Arora perfectly describes as "a provocative compromise between red hots" and dirty socks." There are viscid yellow jelly babies (Leotia lubrica), "dyeing" mushrooms that produce others, purples and blues, and some deadly ones, too-death caps and destroying angels (Amanita phalloides and Amanita ocreata).

A New England native, I live in rural Northern California, in part because feeling alien makes me more awake. The delights of estrangement are most sensuous in winter, when instead of snow and toe and wind chill factors the whole forest comes wildly alive. Redwood trees can grow up to four feet in the season, and the fungus is defiantly among us. After the first rain, a hundred boletes, each one big as a head, pop up in a day. (Boletes are sometimes distinguished by their large size and by the "sponge" under the cap instead of "teeth" or "gills." Many of the mildly toxic boletes stain red or blue when cut with a knife, and the edible ones are fairly easy to key.)

The king bolete (Boletus edulis) is the grandest looking. Arora calls it "a bald bulbous pillar of thick white fleshthe one aristocrat the peasantry can eat!"

I've counted 72 Amonita muscaria out by the compost, brilliant red flares warted white on top. I've seen a mushroom the exact shape and coloration of a lemon meringue pie appear on the side of a Douglas fir, a gelatinous sulfuric ooze spreading under a viscid

white puff. Such mysteries can be understood, named, and sometimes eaten. But I'm also drawn to mushrooms because of their confident, adorable masculinity-the homely upthrust in a bed of duff, the hoary bloom of decadent youth-their almost human nature.

For our camp foray, we choose a second-growth redwood and pine forest a couple of miles inland from the coast. The land is private; our group claims fungus as communal property. (But we politely cover our tracks.) Zack finds the largest mushroom, a six pound artist's conk (Ganoderma applanatum). The tiniest is a thumbnail-sized LBM (little brown mushroom). The hands-down sexiest fungus is a lascivious western grisette (Amonita vaginata); a waggish member of our group affixes the volva to the bulb more securely with a wooden skewer.

Back at camp, we revel in a dinner I wouldn't try at home: sautéed Boletus edulis and Iemony Boletus mirabilis; perfect, melon colored hedgehogs (Dentinum repandum); autumn coccora (Amanita calyptroderma); a soufflé of Point Arena Dungeness crab with orange and white chanterelles (Cantharellus cibarius and subaibidus); purple amethystinas; and black trumpets of death (Craterellus cornucopioides—edible and sublime, in spite of the name). Washed down with red wine, it's the best food I have ever eaten.

Knowing a little about mushrooms inspires confidence and humility. Alone in the woods now, foraging in the fog with a basket and a knife. I become-fleetingly-the scientific sybarite I'd like to be, carving my initials into an occult bolete and waiting the way lsak Dinesen said she wrote every day, "without hope and without despair." If the flesh stains red or blue, I'll ignore my intuition, and believe my eyes.

Carolyn Cooke is the author of the short story collection The Bostons (Houghton Mifflin). She lives in Point Arena, California, with her husband and two children.

THE BEST AMERICAN SERIES "

2002

AMERICAN
SHEBEST

AMERICAN
SHORT

STORIES

SUE MILLER

Selected stories read by Carolyn Cooke, Richard Ford, Sue Miller, Akhil Sharma, and others HOUGHTON MIFFLIN

### FIRST, BEST, AND BEST-SELLING

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From The Best American Short Stories 2002 collection, here are eight unabridged tales that are full of subtle wisdom and shimmering insights into love and loss—stories that bring us characters as recognizable as they are appealing.

INTRODUCTION by Sue Miller

ALONG THE FRONTAGE ROAD by Michael Chabon, read by Joe Fox

THE SUGAR-TIT by Carolyn Cooke, read by the author

SEVEN by Edwidge Danticat, read by Stephanie Marson Lee

PUPPY by Richard Ford, read by the author

THE HEIFER by Melissa Hardy, read by the author

WATERMELON DAYS by Tom McNeal, read by the author

FAMILY FURNISHINGS by Alice Munro, read by Sue Miller

SURROUNDED BY SLEEP by Akhil Sharma, read by the author

is the best-selling author of The Good Mother, Inventing the Abbotts, Family Pictures (nominated for a National Book Critics Circle Award), While I Was Gone (an Oprah pick), and, most recently, The World Below.



RINER ORIGINAL

ABEST AMERICAN DISCOVERY

The Story

"Wonderful stories, powerfully conceived and executed with adiamond-clear precision." - Madison Smartt Bell



"A fierce intelligence — an eye as exacting as Hawthorne's, a wit as sharp as O'Connor's. The characters who move through these linked stories speak for all the gorgeous strangeness of the world. Cooke writes with a grace and precision that terrifies as it transports; this book will leave you breathless." — Kate Walbert, author of Where She Went and The Gardens of Kyoto

"These characters are so unexpected, genuine, and deftly etched they will leave an imprint on even the most stubborn reader's heart." — Diane Leslie, author of Fleur de Leigh's Life of Crime

Carolyn Cooke's stories have been featured in several volumes of *Prize Stories:* The O. Henry Awards and The Best American Short Stories. Her highly anticipated debut collection tells hilarious and often savage truths about people struggling within the confines of history, society, and class.

Mr. Sargent, the aging Brahmin aesthete of the title story, scribbles his epiphanies on cocktail napkins and covers them up with his drinks. A Maine innkeeper shoots his wife, who remains bitterly loyal to him until the death of their son. A whole family conspires to keep the birth of yet another dirt-poor relation a secret from his grandmother. On the icy cobblestone streets of Boston and the rockbound coast of Maine, these vividly realized characters try to reconcile habits of obedience and self-reliance with the urgent desire to capture the wild core of life. The result is an explosion of exquisitely tuned voices, as authentic as they are unforgettable.

CAROLYN COOKE was raised in Bar Harbor, Maine, and Boston. A recent recipient of a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts, she lives in Point Arena, California, with her husband and two children.

"Evokes with precise passion the contradictions of desire, the sublime silliness and seriousness of human connection. A thrilling debut." — Deborah Weisgall, author of A Joyful Noise and Still Point



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### The Bostons

by Carolyn Cooke

- Introduction
- Praise for The Bostons
- About the Author
- A Conversation with Carolyn Cooke



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#### Introduction

"The Bostons" is the name Maine natives use describe the urban out-of-towners who regularly invade their coastal villages in search of simple pleasures and summer distractions. The interactions of these seemingly disparate communities and the rich cast of characters who inhabit them form the emotional crux of Carolyn Cooke's magnificent collection of short stories, The Bostons.

An exhibitionist society hostess, a runaway lesbian mother, a young girl coping with her first love, a dying man trying to find his last: these are just a few of the wonderfully complicated souls who populate Cooke's collection. The Bostons chronicles the shared narratives of these people, deftly showing us the connections between characters who pride themselves on their differences. Whether describing the shared bedroom of six "dirt-eating" children ("It seemed to be made of girls' dresses, blue jeans and red flannel printed with cowboys and Indians, and everything smelled warm, of wood and sugar and pee") or a young girl recounting her first love ("Buck Burns was the best boy from town, the wildest and the best . . He was so good to look at, so ragged and unbuttoned, he rose right above all the other boys, who were clean and scrubbed and grateful"), Cooke brings an ear as keen as Grace Paley's and an eye as sharp as Lorrie Moore's to the passions and preoccupations of distinctive yet recognizable communities.

The Bostons deals with the grand themes of New England's impressive literary tradition: desire and repression, society and self, the weight of the past and the pressures of the present. In the ancestral homes of Boston and on the rocky shores of Malne, the passion and nerve of Cooke's diverse and lovable cast inevitably collide with the habits of duty and obedience so tied to the world she depicts. With echoes of Nathaniel Hawthorne and Puritan homilies, Carolyn Cooke fuses the voices of this rich region into a funny, generous, and often rebellious collection of fiction.

#### Praise for The Bostons

"A seductively written, engaging first collection . . . Cooke brings the fully rounded pleasures and character depth of a novel to her Interlinked tales . . . Cooke's attractive voice alternately thrusts bluntly and lifts poetically, keeping the reader alive to the shifts of

emotional texture and mood that enrich this promising debut." - Kirkus Reviews

"Carolyn Cooke writes wonderful stories, powerfully conceived and executed with a diamondclear precision." — Madison Smartt Bell, author of All Souls' Rising, Barking Man, Save Me, Joe Louis, and Straight Cut

"Whether her subject is a girl in love for the first time or a dying man trying one last time for love, Carolyn Cooke evokes with precise passion the contradictions of desire, the sublime silliness and seriousness of human connection. These delicately layered and wonderfully sympathetic stories introduce a community of memorable characters, and they mark a thrilling debut." — Deborah Weisgall, author of A Joyful Noise and Still Point

"The characters in Carolyn Cooke's fascinating collection are so unexpected, genuine, and deftly etched they will leave an imprint on even the most stubborn reader's heart." — Diane Leslie, author of Fleur de Leigh's Life of Crime

"There is a fierce intelligence at work in Carolyn Cooke's striking debut—an eye as exacting as Hawthorne's, a wit as sharp as O'Connor's. Whether an elderly couple making preparations for death or children running amok under the supervision of drunks, the characters who move through these linked stories somehow transcend their small circumstances to speak for all the gorgeous strangeness of the world. Cooke writes with a grace and precision that terrifies as it transports; this book will leave you breathless." — Kate Walbert, author of Where She Went and The Gardens of Kyoto

#### About the Author

Carolyn Cooke's short stories have been featured in The Best
American Short Stories and Prize Stories: The O. Henry Awards. Cooke, a winner of
fellowships from the National Endowment of the Arts and Yaddo and a graduate of
Columbia's MFA program, has published fiction and nonfiction in the Paris
Review, Ploughshares, the New England Review, and The Nation. Her diverse journalistic
experience includes writing for The Nation, editing for Penthouse, and working "as a
muckracker for the Anderson Valley Advertiser, a socialist weekly." Cooke is also a founder
of Pacific Community Charter School in Point Arena, California, and frequently writes on
school reform issues. She lives in northern California with her husband, a poet, and her two
children.

#### A Conversation with Carolyn Cooke

#### Q) Where does the title of your book, The Bostons, come from?

A) My grandfather made it up, I think. Since he was and is so self-deprecating, he used the term to describe his own kind—summer people, not tourists, who went to the coast of Maine from Boston and New York every summer and hoarded real estate through ridiculously intact generations. They lived an austere, cold-water life there, except they had boats and books, and generally they behaved as if they owned the place. As a Maine native—what my grandfather would call "a Maine girl"—I liked the sense of outsiders in a culture seeing themselves as harshly and critically as they imagined the insiders must see them. Henry James did that, of course, though less in *The Bostonians* than in *The Europeans*, in which the Old World and the New spend a few hundred pages gazing at each other with horror and interest. One of my favorite lines in literature is in that novel, where James's narrator observes, "There was something rather hard and narrow in Gertrude, and she never cried again."

#### Q) How autobiographical are the stories in The Bostons, and in what ways?

A) I grew up on the coast of Maine and in the purlieus of Boston, and was always conscious of how warily those two different cultures regarded each other, yet how similar they were. Circumstances were different, but this had mostly to do with class, that weird distillation of money and history. People are the same everywhere, but it seems to me that New Englanders put an enormously high value on qualities of character that don't do them much good—duty, obedience, loyalty, diligence. I wanted to write about people who try to break away from those habits, who make real efforts to experience radical sensations and who reach for things—ike beauty and pleasure—that they don't quite know how to use. My stories don't usually start with my personal stories. They start with beautiful junk, or with ugly junk, with details that resist but suggest significance.

#### Q) When did you begin writing?

A) When I was seven or eight. I used to write stories in which terrible things happened to a kid like me. It thrilled me to read them aloud to anyone who'd listen. I was so shy I could hardly speak, but I was a loud reader. I loved speaking in a bold voice that didn't have to be mine. My father died in a boating accident when he was thirty. My family, very tiny, powerful women, always told stories, usually over cocktails, the same two or three stories over and over. The stories were finished works, they were so polished. Always the same words, the same dramatic pauses, the same punchlines, Stories were a way of asking, What happened? What did it mean? Did we do it to ourselves? I learned then that "truth" and "reality" are inventable. They depend on who is telling the story, on the fact that someone is telling a story, on certain recognizable pressures of tone and language and voice, organized into a form that makes life seem organized and believable.

I was a secretive kid, myopic and ratlike. I remember going to a slaughterhouse in Boston, seeing hundreds of cats in dark cages. Somebody said they were chickens, but I knew what I saw—cats: tails, stripes, and yellow eyes. I think that's what writing is—allowing yourself to believe what you see without corrective lenses, to see what you see before somebody tells you what's really there, what a child or a nearsighted person or a sick or damaged person sees. If what you saw with your own eyes made sense—if you agreed with the general opinion of reality—you wouldn't need to write.

#### Q) Who are some writers who have made an impression on you?

A) I admire fluent, strung-out voices that risk poetry and comedy and are rather dark in tone. Among contemporary writers, the short stories of Grace Paley, Lorrie Moore, Denis Johnson, Leonard Michaels, Junot Díaz. Among novelists, Joan Didlon, Don DeLillo. Rather high-strung narrratives that pull the tune right out of your head. Virginia Woolf. When I was younger, learning to read more greedily, trying to invent a sensibility I could bear to live with, my head was full of men. I read a lot of Updike—particularly the Rabbit books and the early short stories, and Couples of course, which I read with such steamy devotion in the library that the librarian called my mother to complain. Cheever. Poe. Edwin Arlington Robinson, who made such heartbreaking ditties and talked about "the ache to be sublime." I also loved—love—Henry James, who looked at Americans so cleverly, through about three windows. He was a wonderful spy, alien but interested—a real voyeur.

#### Q) What have you done for work to support your writing habit?

A) In the 1980s I worked at *Penthouse* magazine—wrote advertising and publicity and was an occasional voiceover on radio. It was a very heady time in the sex business, the very final hours, it turned out, of the sexual revolution! My tuition at the MFA program at Columbia came from my salary at *Penthouse*. I had to take courses around lunchtime. Those were the days when you could take three-hour lunches and nobody would think twice, they just assumed you were doing coke and having sex. I also worked as an editor and a copywriter at a couple of other magazines in New York, *Omni* and *Avenue*. In the early nineties I moved with my husband to northern California, where I live now, and had two babies the way people do here—bellowing undrugged in a cabin in the woods. I worked for several years as an editorial assistant to Alexander Cockburn, the journalist and polemicist, and also as a muckraker for the *Anderson Valley Advertiser*, an anarcho-syndicalist country weekly put out by the brilliant editor and writer Bruce Anderson.

#### Q) Do you see yourself as a regional writer-as a particularly New England writer?

A) No. The struggle against conscience and rectitude is the main theme of *The Bostons*, I guess—though I never thought about that until now. But I've lived in northern California for almost a decade. I live in a town where it's considered rude to ask somebody's last name or where they come from—too historical. I think that's interesting too.

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# Praise for The Bostons: Stories By Carolyn Cooke

"Gleaming artfulness...Ms. Cooke's fading old Bostonians share a puzzlement that lurks in our own more universal calendars...a terrifying stoicism; chiller than moral evil; it is moral solitude."

- Richard Eder, The New York Times

"With a nod toward Henry James's New England classic, this collection...shuns stuffy, turn-of-the-last century Bostonians for gruffer characters, offering a dramatic and realistic portrayal of Northeasterners from Cambridge, Mass., to the Maine coast...This debut....does not disappoint."

- Publisher's Weekly

"A seductively written, engaging first collection...Cooke brings the fully rounded pleasures and character depth of a novel to her interlinked tales...Cooke's attractive voice alternately thrusts bluntly and lilts poetically, keeping the reader alive to the shifts of emotional texture and mood that enrich this promising debut."

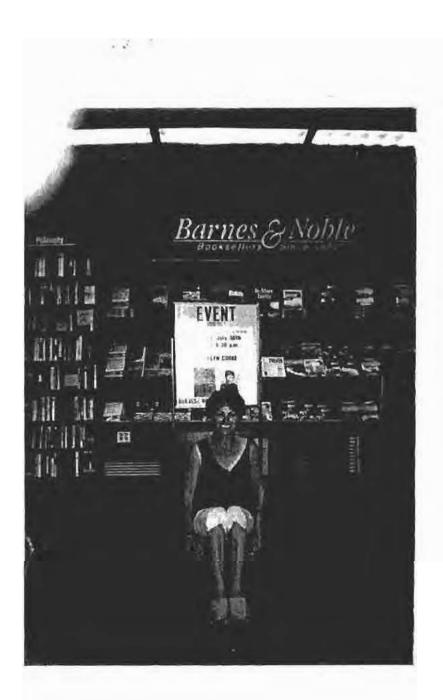
- Kirkus Reviews

"O. Henry award winner Cooke lures us into the vague spaces that exist between native and 'Boston,' man and woman, father and child, life and death. An ailing man finds perfection in the fantastic motion of a train; an elderly painter fumbles toward mortality and, more immediately, assisted living. In each glimpse, Cooke teases telling bits of existence from her subjects – sometimes with humor, sometimes with regret, always with grace."

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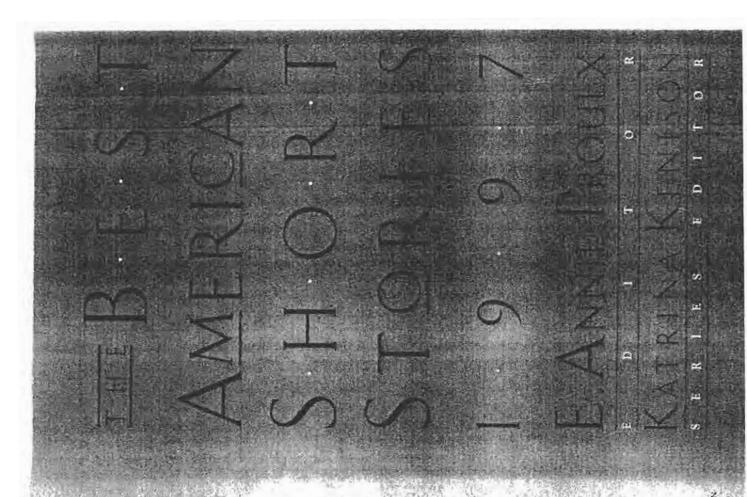
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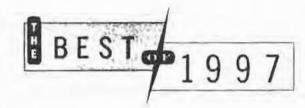
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# Gettysburg The Gettysburg Review



# The Gettysburg Review

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"the middle of the journey" of their lives, both Kerouac and Cassady lay dead, within nine months of each other. The image of Neal as a doomed illuminated being comes on early. He sped through life too fast for anyone to keep up, including Carolyn, and she was awed by his running discourses "on three levels at once." And she "saw him pursue death with every breath of life." And we see him at one of his trades, as a tire vulcanizer (his other was railroading) in a dark auto shed, a dark figure in goggles, bare to the waist, enveloped in fire and smoke from the burning rubber.

Toward the end, the train of his life seemed to speed up, the tracks narrowing before him. Before he was found dead near the railroad tracks outside San Miguel de Allende in 1968, Carolyn saw how he had "given all of himself away and only the broken shell was left." She wept for "the golden light that had been his gift." She had "always dreaded the thought of Neal as an old man." He would never be one.

Frontier heroes cannot just fade away; they must die in their prime, but live on ever-young in our minds, as Neal does in mine.

She leaves Carlo, the boyfriend she met back in parasitology, and catches a Greyhound home to Grace, where she spends a year teaching general biology to a gaggle of high school students and chasing down the shadows of her past.

Grace is a town where people roast a goat to make you feel welcome. Everywhere are the brilliant colors of poverty in a warm climate-the reds, oranges and livid purples of the vegetation and women's dresses, the graves meticulously studded with white stones and tequila bottles, "the simplest thing done with the greatest care." Silver loafers pass as haute couture in the airless windows of the Hollywood Shop; the Baptist Grocery survives to recall a time of more serious spiritual divisiveness; and the semilla besada trees are bedecked hopefully with baby socks and the envelopes of pension checks. When Codi returns to Grace after her years in the great world, everyone remembers how tall she was in seventh grade and her orthopedic shoes.

Those who know Kingsolver from The Bean Trees and her 1989 story collection Homeland and Other Stories will recognize a few familiar riffs. Her characters have a strong sense of science at work in the world and use the plant and animal kingdoms to explain each other. (In a short story called "Covered Bridges," a young woman who lost a sister to a bee . sting devotes herself to saving others via a poison hotline; in Animal Dreams, Hallie Noline grows restless dispensing agricultural advice on the Tucson houseplant hotline and makes a beeline south to help peasant farmers reclaim soil denatured by poverty and politics.)

The symbolism of Grace (the town) is almost hopelessly heavy-handed, but she redeems herself with her clear and original voice, her smart, plucky women, her eye for the nuances of personality and the depth of her social and moral concerns. Kingsolver can help you learn how to live.

Her previous fiction shows her mind migrating westward from Bobbie Ann Mason country (Kingsolver grew up in eastern Kentucky, the setting of her stories and starting point of her first novel). Like Mason's characters, Kingsolver's are sometimes funnier than they mean to be. But although the spunky voice from her earlier fiction remains in characters like Emelina Domingos ("Shoot, you look like a fifty-dollar bill. Where'd you get that haircut, Paris, France?") and the woman Codi -----

#### **Arizona Dreaming**

CAROLYN COOKE

ANIMAL DREAMS. By Barbara Kingsolver. HarperCollins. 342 pp. \$21.95.

ark a route from Bobbie Ann Mason's Kentucky through Willa Cather's grainy plains to Georgia O'Keeffe's Southwest, and you will have followed Barbara Kingsolver to the spot on the map where she stakes her literary claim. Kingsolver the Kentuckian has been seduced by the high contrasts of Arizona, by the mythic scale of the landscape: the surreal pinks and red dust, canyons and arroyos, prickly pear and acacia trees, petroglyphs written in the walls of rock, the chalky skulls of buffaloes immortal in the dirt.

Arizona is exotic as the Amazon in Animal Dreams, Kingsolver's second novel and third work of fiction. Just as Cather's hard-baked plains reflect images of corn bent like the backs of so many yellowhaired Norwegians, so is Animal Dreams an elaborate equation between the vibrant landscape and its peoples, the Native Americans whose gentle hands have shaped and lent a thythm to the land and the later immigrants whose Spanish names Kingsolver slathers on her prose like guacamole on a taco-Emelina and Viola Domingos, Homero, Halimeda and Cosima, Pocha and Juan Teobaldo, Cristobal. Transcending regionalism, Kingsolver makes the Southwest the Garden of Eden, Eldorado and Xanadu rolled

into one. It is a state of, well, grace, and she examines the possibilities the town of Grace, Arizona, might imply: being born into Grace, leaving it and returning

changed.

Animal Dreams comprises an intelligent, moving chronicle of three lives at different points on a shifting timeline: Cosima (Codi) Noline, the central character, who returns to her hometown of Grace in disgrace, having dropped out of medicine in her first year of residency; her eccentric father, Homero (Doc Homer), who serves Grace both as obstetrician and coroner but suffers from Alzheimer's disease; and Halimeda (Hallie) Noline, Codi's sister, an activist who appears in the novel only in her letters home from Nicaragua. At its best, Animal Dreams resists summary: It aspires to the gluey, webby, inexplicable condition of life. At its weakest, and like Kingsolver's first novel, The Bean Trees (1988), this one flirts with the condition of heartwarming-ness; in celebrating ordinary life, it looks blindly over the occasional meanness or venality that give texture and contrast to our experience of goodness. There are no bad guys in Kingsolver's Graceful universe. Codi's Pueblo-Apache-Navajo lover gives up his brilliant career in cockfighting because Codiand his mother-ask him to.

The short story is this: Codi Noline has fallen from Grace. She has gone from med school resident to 7-Eleven clerk in one freefall; she has felt the blue pall of the great world, lost her innocence and her empathy in the mountains of Crete, birthplace of Zeus. Sister Hallie, meantime, has become a hero in the classical mode and is off to Nicaragua to save

Carolyn Cooke teaches the humanities and writing at the Waring School in Beverly, Massachusetts, and at Emmanuel College in Boston. Her latest fiction is ing the tradition he had been staking out. He put out only one issue of The Seventies, a noticeably temperate one. The warrior was giving way to the gardener and lover, two roles that Bly lived through and that noticeably "moistened" his poetry in the eighties. They also provided two more stages in the process of male initiation that he took into his work with the men's movement. So did certain personal experiences of shame, guilt and loss, along with the aging process through which the holds that a father and son put on each other can turn into a yearning embrace. So, too, did his awareness that the young men in the literary and New Age circles he visited and who visited him on his farm had been weakened by the feminism of the era, and that male consciousness was in short and despairing supply. It was time, as Bly would say, to do something for the hive again.

Iron John, then, grows not only out of Bly's experience during the past decade in the men's movement but out of the central meanings of his life. If he has bought into the confusion and anxiety of many younger men today, caught between the new sensitivity and the old machismo, he has done so with the capital he has earned from his own growth as a man, a poet, a thinker and a husbandman of the culture. The souled fierceness that he prescribes for staking out and protecting the borders of male identity has provided much of the motive energy for his career as a literary radical. By the same token, his devotion to asserting and cultivating the primalness and primacy of the imagination in a highly domesticated and institutionalized literary culture has led him to view the condition of men in similar terms and to apply the learning he has acquired in the archeology and anthropology of the imagination to remedy it. This authority is finally what makes Iron John a serious, groundbreaking book.

The startling public appeal of Bly's therapeutic sermon is not hard to fathom. Based on Jungian psychology, it takes a much more positive measure of human potential for change than does the Freudian model, whose Great Father and Great Mother are pretty strictly one's own and give not much quarter to altering their influence: a foot of freedom here, a pound less grief there. Bly's pagan goodspell is that the gods are still around and within each of us, able to be mobilized or deactivated, as the case may be. Like Rilke's torso of Apollo, they search

us out where it aches and command us to treat it and thereby change our lives.

Also, Iron John has a lot of specific insight and lore to teach men and employs a very effective method. It takes an old story and gives it a new spin, thereby enlisting the child in us who is still most open to learning and the adult who is keen to escape from his own banality. Along with combining therapy for men, or at the very least clarity, with a course in the world mythology and ethnography of male initiation, Iron John is also a spiritual poetry reading in which the words of Blake and Kabir, Rumi and Yeats and many others join Bly's own poems as a kind of accompaniment to the text.

The prominence of poetry in the men's movement is perhaps its most surprising feature; none of the other situational groups seem to be particularly disposed to it, and most poets would tend to agree with Auden that poetry "makes nothing happen." Perhaps it's only an aspect of Bly's influence, but I see it as part of the same reviving interest in the imagination

signified by the increasing popularity of poetry readings.

Some people say that the men's movement will have to move into national polities, as the women's movement has done, if it is to survive its trendiness and become socially significant. I'm not so sure. As the bonanza of the Reagan era recedes and the midlife crisis of its favored generation draws on, there are a lot of men in America who have mainly their imaginations to fall back upon. As a social analysis of male distress, Iron John is pretty thin stuff; but that's not why it is being read. It's not the Growing Up Absurd of the nineties but rather a deeply based counsel of self-empowerment and change. Like the men's movement itself. it offers the sixties generation another crack at the imagination of alternatives they grew up on, right where they most inwardly live and hurt and quest. This is the imagination that they turned in to become Baby Boomers; if it can be let loose in America by this broad, influential and growing situational group, there's no telling what can happen.

#### Chasing Austen

CAROLYN COOKE

BRIEF LIVES. By Anita Brookner. Random House. 260 pp. \$20.

he British novelist Anita Brookner writes orderly, limpid prose about women who have been good girls all their lives, who have lived carefully and within the rules, but who, when they reach a critical mass of experience and disappointment, harden. The question is whether they acquire a granite toughness and become venerable, or, like sandstones too long exposed to weather, they grow brittle and crumble. This tension between venerableness and brittleness informs some of Brookner's best work-The Misalliance, A Friend From England and the Booker Prizewinning Hotel du Lac-and it is the central theme of her newest novel, Brief Lives.

Like Edith Hope, the writer of romance novels in Hotel du Lac, or Blanche Vernon in The Misalliance, who "occupied her time most usefully in keeping feelings at bay," Fay Dodworth is a woman turning to dust. She is unfertile, sere,

Carolyn Cooke is a writer and teacher living in Massachusetts.

pristine as a chalk cliff and-this unfortunately is true of most of Brookner's characters-humorless. Without the context Brookner tries to give her, a locus of empathy and psychological realism. Dodworth would be just another stiff upper lip casting a shadow on a Burberry, a rigid tweedy figure among the boxed biscuits at Harrod's.

Dodworth (doddering but worthy) is a widow of a certain age, a former singer of popular ballads on radio who, years ago, threw up her career to marry. Marrying slightly above herself, marrying for love was, Fay now realizes, a mistake. Marriage, the hoped-for denouement of the short story of youth in Jane Austen's novels, turns out, in Brookner's late day, to be based on lies, misalliances, each couple a handwoven tapestry threaded with its own pattern of unhappiness. In exchange for her heart, Fay got thirty years in haute suburban oblivion-"engraved wine glasses . . . (a) bed big enough for the birth of royalty, the winsome fresco in the bathroom." In late middle age, time for writing up a life's page of regrets, Fay realizes that she would sacrifice everything for "a bunch of blue carnations, magnificently vulgar, from the market. I began to discern depths of superficiality and bad taste in

### StoryQuarterly 21

Stories from the
Gordon Lish Workshops
Edited by J. D. Dolan

#### Pamela Painter

Catherine Conover Donald Hoffman Karen Kruty Barbara Nodine Sue Powers Don Young

Audrey Reynolds

Jayne De La Huerga

Terry Seaman

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# E PARIS REVIEW C&CA 4A-45



#### THE INTERNATIONAL LITERARY QUARTE

#### INTERVIEWS

CAMILO JOSÉ CELA, THE NOBEL LAUREATE, AND WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY
DISCUSS THE ART OF FICTION

A.R. AMMONS ON THE ART OF POETRY

FICTION

CAROLYN COOKE, BOB DARLING

GUY DAVE PORT, DINNER AT THE BANK OF ENGLAND

ON THAN FRANZEN, CHEZ LAMBERT

BEN SORNE HEEG. THE CREASE AND RECHERCHE

POETRY

GEOR OF DEL CAROLYNIATZER,

CHERRY AND OTHERS

JOHN HOPKINS HIS TANGIER DIARIES

JAMES LORD RECALLS THE REUNION OF PICASSO AND COCTEAU

IN THE SOUTH OF FRANCE

LEGNA CHRISTIE, PHILIP SMITH, DONALD SILITAN

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The Nancy Hanks Center 1100 Pennsylvania Avenue NW Washington DC 20506-0001 202/682-5400

Ms. Carolyn Cooke 25524 Ten Mile Cutoff P.O. Box 462 Point Arena, CA 95468

JAN - 6 1998

Dear Ms. Cooke:

On behalf of the National Endowment for the Arts, It is a pleasure to inform you that you have been awarded a Creative Writing Fellowship grant.

Grant Number:

98-5211-5033

Grant Amount:

\$20,000

Lund

Discipline/Field:

Literature

Period of Support: February 1, 1998 to June 30, 1999

Grant Project: To support activities which contribute to your creative development and artistic growth and may include writing. research, and travel, as described in your application (A97-017811).

The enclosed "General Terms & Conditions" provide detail information concerning the Endowment's regulations and procedures, the administrative requirements that apply to your grant, and your responsibilities as a grantee. Please read this material carefully.

If you have any questions regarding the administrative requirements of this grant, our Grants & Contracts Office staff will be happy to assist you. They may be reached at 202/682-5403.

Congratulations on your grant award!

Lenkly Refersor

Sincerely,

Scott Shanklin-Peterson Senior Deputy Chairman

Enclosures

From: Laurie Fox <lafox@earthlink.net>
To: Carolyn Cooke <redtag@mcn.org>
Date: Tuesday, January 8, 2002 11:48 AM

Subject: Re: BINGHAM FELLOWSHIP

December 4, 2001

As her editor, I'd like to nominate Carolyn Cooke for the 2002 PEN/Robert Bingham Fellowship. Houghton Mifflin Company/Mariner Books published Carolyn's first collection of stories, titled THE BOSTONS, in June, 2001. The book received unanimously supportive reviews, was a bestseller in Los Angeles and Boston, and was named a Best Book of the Year by both the Los Angeles Times and the New York Times, something extremely rare for a paperback original short story collection.

Influenced by Henry James' Boston, THE BOSTONS reflects Carolyn's diversity of life experience and her energetic philosophies, as well as her wisdom and generosity of spirit. These are urban and rural stories, stories about the very old and others about the young. Stories about the wealthy and the poor. What draws the stories together is Carolyn's unique voice, her warmth and her humor. She gives us characters so full of life and wonder they can barely contain themselves? Bob Darling, who insists on riding the fastest train in the Europe before he dies. Or Grand, of the "Dirt Eaters", who drinks Jim Beam and dances the Shimmy with her daughter. Of course life is not perfect for these unforgettable characters, and they find themselves bound within the laws? both learned and internalized? that have defined their society since they were born. Mr. Sargent, of the title story, scribbles epiphanies on cocktail napkins then covers them up with his drinks. Young Giddy Shorthall sits perfectly still on a bench in the Boston Public Garden and waits for hours, in the dead of winter, while her parents go to the symphony. Carolyn's characters may experience desires that threaten to swallow them whole, desires for wildness that drive them up to Maine and cause them to try to live like locals. But the Bostons find solace and meaning, for better or for worse, in their ideals of dignity and self-reliance.

THE BOSTONS shows an enormous degree of promise. Each story represents a small part of a colorful, vast world, one Carolyn is currently exploring further in writing her first novel. Many of her characters are elderly people who have lived several lifetimes and possess endless stories. Carolyn is always eager to dig deeper and push ahead to new territory, though, and in her novel she'll explore childhood tragedy— the loss of a parent— and how it informs personality and class awareness in a New England community. I have every confidence that Carolyn's next work will be even more lively, warm, and surprising than her first, and that she'll continue to grow and breathe new life and energy into contemporary fiction.

Thank you for your consideration.

Heidi Pitlor Editor



#### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE May 2002

#### PEN ANNOUNCES 2002 LITERARY AWARDS

First-ever PEN/Robert Bingham Fellowships \$35,000 per year for two consecutive years goes to trio of young American fiction writers

Mario Vargas Llosa to receive \$20,000 PEN/Nabokov Award International prize honors career of world-renowned novelist

Playwrights Tony Kushner & Maria Irene Fornes win PEN/Laura Pels Foundation Awards

Presentation to be held at Lincoln Center on May 20

JOEL CONARROE, President of PEN American Center, the national association of literary writers, and LUANN WALTHER, Chair of the PEN Awards Committee, have announced the winners of the 2002 PEN Literary Awards. The honors given this year include Career Achievement Awards to spotlight lifetime accomplishments; Emerging Writer Awards to call attention to new talents of special promise; and Book Awards that recognize outstanding works, published in the past year, in a variety of genres – the memoir, the literary essay, general nonfiction – and acknowledge the art of translation. The PEN awards will be presented in New York on the evening of Monday, May 20, at the Walter Reade Theater at Lincoln Center, Members of the press are welcome to attend.

#### Highlights of the program:

 The inaugural PEN/Robert Bingham Fellowships for Writers will recognize three exceptionally gifted young fiction writers: MANIL SURI, CAROLYN, COOKE, and MATTHEW KLAM. Fellows receive \$35,000 per year for two consecutive years, and will volunteer their talents during visits to schools and literacy centers around the U.S.

http://www.pen.org/awards/awards02.htm

THE

2002

## PEN

LITERARY AWARDS



Monday, May 20, 2002

#### WELCOMING REMARKS

JOEL CONARROE, PRESIDENT, PEN AMERICAN CENTER

#### PRESENTATION OF AWARDS

LUANN WALTHER, CHAIR, PEN AWARDS COMMITTEE

#### THE PEN/ROBERT BINGHAM FELLOWSHIPS FOR WRITERS

Three fellowships for exceptionally talented fiction writers whose debut work—a first novel or collection of short stories published in 2000 or 2001—represents distinguished literary achievement and suggests great promise Judges: Gail Caldwell, Joel Conarroe, Rick Moody

Remarks by Clara Bingham

Joel Conarroe presents the fellowships.

#### to CAROLYN COOKE, author of The Bostons (Mariner Books/Houghton Mifflin)

Carolyn Cooke's debut collection is as meticulous and fraught with danger as a piece of cut glass, and yet the narrative vision at its core is one of generosity. How else could one make such penetrating observations about the neurotic confines of class, or the devilish tyrannies of love and obligation? Death is all over the stories in The Bostons, but so, accordingly, is life: a terminal patient riding an express train across Europe, a mother offering escargot and other last-ditch adventures to her dying daughter. With a societal shrewdness tethered by emotional precision, Cooke echoes more than one modern master: James or Wharton infused with the vintage wit of Mary McCarthy. Rendering the human mating season in Maine, where "summer boys sawed the air like cicadas," she calls to mind John Cheever. It is to Cooke's great credit that she approaches such range. Heartbreaking and tough-minded both, these stories work from the finest tenets of what the form is meant to do.



PEN American Center, a non-ptolic incorporation, is an affiliate at international PEN, on association at writers, fraest playerights, essays is, editors, navelists a with centers in Africa, the American, Afric, Australia and Europe

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Executive Director

#### The 2002 PEN/Robert Bingham Fellowships for Writers

to
Carolyn Cooke
author of *The Bostons* (Houghton Mifflin)

Carolyn Cooke's debut collection is as meticulous and fraught with danger as a piece of cut glass, and yet the narrative vision at its core is one of generosity. How else could one make such penetrating observations about the neurotic confines of class, or the devilish tyrannies of love and obligation? Death is all over the stories in *The Bostons*, but so, accordingly, is life: a terminal patient riding an express train across Europe, a mother offering escargot and other last-ditch adventures to her dying daughter. With a societal shrewdness tethered by emotional precision, Cooke echoes more than one modern master: James or Wharton infused with the vintage wit of Mary McCarthy. Rendering the human mating season in Maine, where "summer boys sawed the air like cicadas," she calls to mind John Cheever. It is to Cooke's great credit that she approaches such range. Heartbreaking and tough-minded both, these stories work from the finest tenets of what the form is meant to do.

Presented in New York May 20, 2002

> Judges Gail Caldwell Joel Conarroe Rick Moody

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HEM New England Easton Fer Harmond

PEN West

**Publishing Education** 

#### CCNY Looks to Place Interns at Publishers

FIVE YEARS AFTER IT Was | launched with support from bestselling author Walter Mosley and more than \$200,000 in funding from major New York publishers, the Publishing Certificate Program at the City College of New York has graduated about 45 students and placed nearly half of them in book- and publishing-related jobs. The program was launched in an effort to create an academic training program that would attract minority students to the publishing industry.

David Unger, director of the PCP program, told PW that 19 PCP graduates have publishing-related jobs. Among the publishers and book-related firms that have hired PCP graduates are AOL Time Warner, John Wiley, Simon & Schuster and Random House. The program offers undergraduates courses in the skills needed in the publishing industry taught by publishing professionals.

But while publishers have provided significant financial support to the program and have hired its graduates. Unger told PW that major publishing houses were often slow to accept PCP students as interns. "We



The PCP of CCNY held a luncheon last month to honor the recipients of its AAP and Bernard L. Mazel scholarship grants.

have working-class students who don't often have the same cachet as Ivy Leaguers, and it can be tough to get houses to look at our students for internships. If publishers are going to give us money to train students, they need to educate their own managers about accepting them."

Nevertheless, PCP works diligently to get its students placed, and about 25 students worked as volunteers at the recent BookExpo. This year the program also received a special grant from the Association of American Publishers to add to its Bernard Mazel publishing opportunity scholarships, and Unger was able to

award five \$1,000 grants to PCP students.

"We've carved out a niche," said Unger, "the caliber of our students has increased and we're introducing publishing as an option to students who haven't considered it before. We want publishers' money, but we also want to give them back a qualified and diverse workforce."

-CALVIN REID

E-publishing

#### **Blackboard** Nears Profits

In DOT COM YEARS, Blackboard Inc. in Washington, D.C., one of the leaders in education software, is practically middle-aged Started by Matthew Pittinsky and Michael Chasen in 1997, the five-year-old firm anticipates becoming profitable late this year.

"In the third quarter of 2002, we'll be profitable," said Blackboard chairman Pittinsky. "Revenue will go to \$70 million." According to recently released figures for fiscal year 2001, the company's revenues increased 201% last year to reach \$46.5 million, a figure that makes Blackboard one of the largest online course management systems in the post-secondary school market. Its client base of universities, colleges and el-hi school systems is close to 2,400 schools in 45 countries, which translates into 5.6 million users Some associations, corporations and commercial education providers also use Blackboard courses and/or its portal.

In part, Blackboard's rapid growth has been fueled by strate-

gic partnerships with publishers, including Pearson Education, one of the company's early investors, as well as Elsevier and Thomson, Thomson will offer what Blackboard calls "course cartridges," or supplemental textbook content in digital form that is available through institution-run Blackboard Web sites. Currently Blackboard offers 1,100 distinct cartridges, with new ones being added monthly Both Pearson and Elsevier already offer cartridges and will license Blackboard's technolpgy to become online course providers themselves.

But Blackboard is not the only firm to prosper as universities add online components to their course offerings. "We and our competitors have seen massive adoptions," said Pittinsky. "It's almost to the point that there's an equal amount of digital content. All the major publishers are filling in that void, either because they don't want to lose a sale or to protect a sale."

The flip side of prosperity is that digital course providers are undergoing a shakeout. "What you're seeing," said Pittinsky "is that publishers want to partner with one or two companies that can deliver 60%-70% of the universities."

In order to insure market share going forward, Blackboard acquired the Prometheus software package developed by George Washington University early this year. — Juditi Rosen

Prizes

#### PEN 2002 Literary Awards

In addition to its literary awards, PEN presented a new fellowship in memory of the late author Robert Bingham at its annual awards dinner last month. The fellowship, which carries a stipend of \$35,000 per year for two consecutive years, was awarded to three fiction au-

Happy fellows: pictured (I. to r.) are Clara Bingham, Matt Klam, Vanessa Chase (Bingham's widow) and Carolyn Cooke.

thors who debuted in 2000-2001. The recipients were Carolyn Cooke, Matthew Klam and Manil Suri.

The \$5,000 working writer

fellowship was awarded to Lori Aurelia Williams. The literary award winners were Frederick Seidel (poetry, \$5,000). David Bromwich for Skeptical Music (essay, \$5,000). Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky for their translation of Anna Karenina (translation, \$5,000). Anne

> Twitty for her translation of Islandia (poetry in translation, \$3,000); Nina Bernstein for The Lost Children of Wilder (first nonfiction, \$1,000); and Paula Fox for Borrowed Finery (memoir, \$1,000). The PEN/Nabokov Award of \$20,000 for

bifetime achievement was given to novelist Mario Vargas Llosa, who will share the award with his three English-language translators.

20 Publishers Werkly - June 3, 2002

# Hemingway Foundation/PEN Award for First Fiction

# CAROLYN COOKE

2002 Runner-Up

# The Bostons

Houghton Mifflin Company

Sue Miller

Chair of PEN New England

Dear Ourton

Scott Donaldson President, Hemingway Foundation/Society

The Boston Globe April 7, 2002

# L.L. Winship / PEN New England Award

presented to:

# Carolyn Cooke

2002 Finalist

for

The Bostons (Houghton Mifflin Company)

nd Shan

Richard Gliman Publisher of The Boston Globe

Sue Miller

Chair of PEN New England

April 7, 2002

The Boston Globe

#### Los Angeles Times Bestsellers

July 1, 2001

#### Southern California Rating

#### FICTION

- GIRL WITH A PEARL EARRING by Tracy Chevalier (Plume: \$12) The woman who impured a Vermeer painting.
- WHITE TEETH by Zadie Smith (Viniage: 514) Race, vex and class refracted in the lives of two eccentric London families.
- 3 BEE SEASON by Myla Goldberg (Vintage: \$13) A young girl wins her family s attention after excelling at spelling bees.
- 4 THE HUMAN STAIN by Philip Roth (Vintage: \$14) Sex and scandal surround an aging faculty dean in a quiet town.
- 5 BRIDGET IONES'S DIARY by Helen Fielding (Penguin: \$12.95) A thirtysomething Londoner's quest for a mate.
- 6 THE RED TENT by Anita Diamant (Picudor USA: \$14) The blossoming of Dinah, Jacob's only daughter, in Genesis.
- 7 GLUE by Irvine Welth (W. W. Norton: \$14.95) Four chums in the Edinburgh slums. Reviewed by Jonathan Levi. Page 10.
- 8 ANIL'S GHOST by Michael Ondoutje (Vintage: \$13) An anthropologist investigates murder in Ceylon.
- 9 THE FEAST OF LOVE by Charles Baxter (Vintage: \$13) Love, sacrifice and redemption in Michigan lives.
- 10 THE BOSTONS by Carolyn Cooke (Mariner: \$12) Stones of the offbeat, flawed folk living in a coastal town in Maine.



#### NONFICTION

- ME TALK PRETTY ONE DAY by David Sedaris (Little, Brown: \$14.95) Wisecracking essays on life in Paris and elsewhere
- 2 THE GREATEST GENERATION by Tom Brokaw (Dell: \$12.95) The men and women who came of age in the Depression.
- 3 RiCH DAD, POOR DAD by Robert T. Kryosaki with Sharan L. Lechter (Techpress: \$15.95) Adventures in fiscal parenting.
- 4 A HEARTBREAKING WORK OF STAGGERING GENRUS by Daise Eggers (Vintage: \$14) A 22-year-old raises his kid brother
- 5 WORST-CASE SCENARIO SURVIVAL HANDBOOK: TRAVEL by J. Piven & D. Borgenicht (Chronicle: \$14.95) Help on the run.
- 6 IN THE HEART OF THE SEA by Nathaniel Philbrick (Penguin: \$14) The whaling tragedy that inspired "Moby-Dick."
- 7 THE WORST-CASE SCENARIO SURVIVAL HANDBOOK by Joshua Piven & David Borgenicht (Chronicle: \$14.95)5-Q-S
- 8 THE BETRAYAL OF AMERICA by Vincent Bugliosi (Thurders Mouth Press/Nation Books: \$9.95) Notes on Election 2000.
- 9 THE GHOSTS OF ECHO PARK by Ron Emler (Echo Park Publishing: \$15) A pictorial history of the neighborhood.
- 10 ON WRITING by Stephen King (Pocker: \$14.95) Memoir of the writer's early years and the inspiration for "Carrie."



Rankings are based on a Times poll of Southland bookstores.



November 10, 2002

### SMALL MIRACLES

A pair of 'best of' short-story collections differ yet strikingly show that the genre's alive and well

#### Reviewed by Scott Leibs

riting is an act of seduction, and for that reason the short-story writer is up against it. For every page that a novelist has with which to work a spell, the shortstory writer has but a sentence, or less. While it's often said that the short story has more in common with poetry than with the novel, short-story writers must, like novelists, develop both characters and a narrative arc, with at least a passing nod to setting and the other elements of fiction. To immerse a reader instantly yet gracefully in a story that moves surely toward a surprising but inevitable conclusion is the literary equivalent of landing a jet on an aircraft carrier. There are scores of novelists who have never written a short story, and scores more who have never written a good one.

A concentrated reading experience would seem ideally suited for today's shorter attention spans, yet short stories are read mostly by those who aspire to write them. True, several mainstream magazines continue to include short fiction within their editorial repertoires, but most short stories appear in quarterlies with circulations rivaling a typical Christmas card list.

So whatever one may think of their selection methodologies, the annual "best of" anthologies



that appear in stores each fall perform a valuable public service. The two best-known, "O. Henry Prize Stories 2002" and "The Best American Short Stories," offer 20 stories each (with very little overlap), chosen by a combination of dedicated and guest editors who have left no journal unturned in pursuit of what strikes them as 'best."

The two differ in feel; the "O. Henry" collection seems to favor more offbeat stories

AMERICAN SHORT STORIES

SUL MILLER

and, perhaps, younger authors, while "Best American" tilts toward more established writers (and magazines, as eight of its 20 stories come. from the New York er). But these dit ferences are sub tle. Either volume will provide established fans and curious newcomers a

tour through many impressively realized fictional worlds. each one experienced in about the time it takes to ride the subway to work or have the dental hygienist call your name.

The "O. Henry" collection offers the added fillip of a first, second and third prize, a sort of "best of the best" playoff system so goofy as to be almost endearing. It will be a rare reader indeed who agrees with the trifecta chosen by guest editors Joyce Carol Oates, Dave Eggers and Colson Whitehead, but their presence, in the form of introductions to their chosen stories, does underscore the fact that there are people who take the short story seriously. (In contrast, a solipsistic introduction written by Sue Miller, guest editor for this year's "Best American" collection, is skippable.)

The first-prize story, "The Ceiling," by Kevin Brockmeier, is a high-concept piece in which the sky falls, quite literally, on a marriage. Second prize goes to "Scordatura," about a preacher's gay son who returns to his Texas home after his lover has died. Both stories are subtle, polished and moving, but also slightly flat.

That becomes apparent when the reader encounters the third-prize story, Louise Erdrich's "The Butcher's Wife,"

which is clearly the best of the three. Most stories in these collections can be grouped under the headings of "romantic relationships" or "family relationships," almost all set in the present day, but Erdrich's story concerns a friendship between two Minnesota women in the 1930s. Having returned to the family farm to care for her widowed and alcoholic father, Delphine Watzka takes a part-time job at a butcher's shop and befriends Eva Waldvogel, the butcher's wife. Stoic to a fault,

Eva ignores the cancer

that is spreading through her body until it's too late. Morphine provides some relief, but there are impediments to its administration. Soon Delphine will do far more than simply wait on customers.

The economy and sureness of touch that Erdrich

brings to bear, exploring not only an interesting relationship but the relationships that loom on the periphery (ties of blood and marriage), while painting vivid details of a distant time and place, is both impressive and seemingly effortless. It calls to mind Alice Munro (whose "Family Furnishings" is one of only two stories to appear in both of these collections), another writer whose stories feel like small novels yet end with a resonance that one associates with the shorter form.

In fact, one can't help notice that women seem more adept at conjuring fully realized worlds than do men - this year, anyway. Case in (counter)point: Jim Shepard's "Love And Hydrogen," which is set at the same time as "The Butcher's Wife." Shepard's story (in "Best American") is set aboard the Hindenburg as it approaches its fate over New Jersey. Thoroughly engaging, at the same time it rings false. The historical details are actually too fascinating, too researched, and the love relationship between two crew members feels manufactured. In short, it feels like a project, a concept lurching toward realization, whereas Erdrich's sto-Ey feels organic, and true. Carolyn Cooke manages an

alchemy similar to Erdrich's in

/ GEN Je-Gran Good Old Neon, by David Foster Wallace Ovidency Prize Stories 2002") Ill spare you any more examples, for instance Illispaire you the literally countless examples of my fraudulence with girls—with the ladies, as they say - in just about every dating relationship I had, or the almost unbellevable amount of fraudulence and calculation involved in my career, not just in terms of manipulating the consumer and manipulating the client into trusting that your agency's ideas are the best way to ma nipulate the consumer, but in the interoffice politics of the agency itself, like for example in sizing up what sorts of things your superiors want to believe (including the belief that they're smarter. than you and that that's why they're your superior) and then in giving them what they want butdoing it just subtly enough that they never get a chance to view you as a sycophant or a yes-man which they want to believe they do not want but instead see you as a tough minded independent thinker who from time to time bows to the weight of their superior intelligence and creative firepower etc. etc. Excerpt from "The Sugar Tit," by Carolyn Cooke to The Best American Short Stories They drank cocktalls in a room filled with charming antiquities from Salem and prizes from the East Indies and hundreds of Greek things. On the mantie an urn showed Zeus about to carry off Ganymede. Swords poked out from the umbrella stand, and there was an old plane with unusually wide keys, which had belonged to some famous hig handed planist. Glddy's friends towered above her, their bosoms wrapped in loopy irish tweeds thick as bathmats, or in woolly sweater They talked about where the best ples came from Brookline; Plasticene deviled eggs bobbed on the ends of their fingers, crystal triangles of gin pobbed in the air. The room shuddered with laughter

"The Sugar-Tit" (also in "Best American"). Set in the Brahmin Boston of decades past, it takes as its protagonist Giddy Shortall, a middle age widow whom we meet as she brings a roast to her father at his Beacon Hill lodging. Most of the story

takes place years before, however, as Giddy's husband spirals out of control, succumbing to heavy drinking and other forces that lie beneath it.

Both stories concern middleage women who must respond, to some degree, to self-destruc-

March 4, 2005

Kate Walbert 355 West 21st. NYC, NY 10011

Edye Ipsaro California Commission on Teaching Credentialing Box 944270 1900 Capitol Ave. Sacramento, California 94244-2700

Dear Edye Ipsaro,

This is written in exuberant support of Carolyn Cooke's application for an Eminence Teaching Credential.

I am the author of three works of fiction, and have been teaching fiction writing at Yale University for nearly fifteen years. My most recent book, Our Kind, was a finalist for the National Book Award last year, and was named one of the best books of the year by The New York Times. Over the course of my career, I have received numerous prizes and literary distinctions.

I consider Carolyn Cooke an esteemed peer and far beyond the norm of writers of literary fiction. I am certainly not alone. She is a supremely gifted writer who is highly regarded within the literary community and recognized as a rising star—her stories have appeared in *The Best American Stories* and the *O.Henry Awards*, considered the most important publications of the year. And her first book, a story collection entitled *The Bostons*, was heralded by the organization PEN, which named the collection a finalist for its prestigious PEN/Hemingway Award and the winner of the Robert Bingham Award. I know that her forthcoming novel is eagerly anticipated by writers and readers alike.

I highly recommend Carolyn Cooke for the Eminence Teaching Credential.

Sincerely,

Kate Walbert



#### 2004 National Book Award Finalist: Fiction

#### KATE WALBERT



2/28/05 9:29 PM

Kate Walbert made her writing debut in 1998 with Where She Went, a collection of interlinked stories that was a New York Times Notable Book in 1998. She is also the author of The Gardens of Kyoto, a novel; and has

published fiction and articles in The New York Times, Paris Review, and DoubleTake. Recipient of fellowships from The National Endowment for the Arts and the Connecticut Commission on the Arts, she teaches writing at Yale and lives in New York City and Stony Creek, Connecticut.

http://www.pationalbook.org/nba2004 kwalbert.htm

fter

#### JOHN SIMON GUGGENHEIM MEMORIAL FOUNDATION

Confidential Report on Candidate for Fellowship

Mr. Ben Sonnenberg 50 Riverside Drive, #14D New York, NY 10024 Candidate: Cooke, Carolyn



REPORT:

68

A novel by Carplyn Cooke? Hooray! Her stunning short stories, The Bostons, yearned to be novels, as well as plays, movies, TV serials....

Carolyn Cooke possesses the essential gift for all great narrative art, that of a dramatist, while at the same time possessing the essential tact of knowing that every form has its shape and its limits.

I strongly recommend Carolyn Cooke for a Guggenheim Fellowship.

Signed\_ Signed\_

Date 12/03/01

Position or Title Writer / Editor

Address (if different from above)

(Please return to John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, 90 Park Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10016, at your earliest convenience. An addressed envelope is enclosed.)

BRUCE BAWER 425 EAST 65TH STREET NEW YORK, N. Y 10021 TELEPHONE 12121 535-1256

#### 21 December 1989

To whom it may concern:

I am writing in regard to Carolyn Cooke, whom I feel privileged to be able to recommend for a Stegner Fellowship. I recommend her in the highest terms.

During the three years that I have known Ms. Cooke, I have come both to respect her tremendously as a writer and to like her enormously as a human being. Her tender, funny, and evocative short stories, many of them set in her native state of Maine, are truly masterly; her eye and her voice are unerring, and her characters drawn with remarkable deftness, compassion, and economy.

As for Ms. Cooke herself, she is as decent and trustworthy a person as I have ever met and is a vivacious, funny, and unpretentious conversationalist—a positive delight to know. She is very deserving of a fellowship and would, I know, both benefit greatly from and contribute greatly to the intellectual and creative atmosphere at your institution.

If you have any questions, please call me at the above number.

Sincerely,

Frue Bun

# STEALING

### S I S D S J



C&CA 4A-

HOW FUNDAMENTALISM

BETRAYS CHRISTIANITY

# BRUCE BAWER

Author of A PLACE AT THE TABLE

(conlinued from front flep)

America without Christianity and the notion of an American Christianity without love and compassion.



BRUCE BAWER is one of our leading cultural critics. Described by Kirkus Reviews as "a literary essayisi for the ages," he has published several volumes of criticism, including Diminishing Fictions, The Aspect of Eternity, and Prophets and Professors, as well as one of the most influential books ever written about homosexuality, A Place at the Table He has delivered talks and sermons in churches around the country and has published essays on religious subjects in The New York Times Magazine and elsewhere.

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AND WILLIAM HUBER/PHOTONICA (BOTTOM)
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#### NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

JUDD A. AND MARJORIE WEINBERG COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Department of English University Hall 215 1897 Sheridan Road Evanston, IL 60208-2240

Telephone: (847) 491-7294 Fax: (847) 467-1545

english-dept@northwestern.edu

March 10, 2005

Edye Ipsaro
California Commission on Teacher Credentialing
P.O. Box 944270
1900 Capitol Avenue
Sacramento, CA 94244-2700

Dear Ms. Isparo,

I am writing to contribute to support Carolyn Cooke for an "Eminence Credential" through the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing. I have known Carolyn's work on a professional level since 1987, when we met at Yaddo, the artist colony in Saratoga Springs. I lived in San Francisco for 16 years, until my relocation to Chicago. I now serve as Director of the Creative Writing Program at Northwestern University, as well as a member of the Associate Faculty at Antioch University Los Angeles' MFA Program in Writing. I am the author of three novels (most recently, The Boom Economy), two books of nonfiction (most recently, Monster: Adventures in American Machismo), and several edited anthologies of fiction (the Best American Gay Fiction series, Writing Home: Award Winning Writing from the New West), and until recently, I was the editor of the "Lit" supplement for the San Francisco Bay Guardian.

Over the years, Carolyn and I have maintained a friendship and exchanged work as colleagues. Through my work as anthologist, instructor, and editor, I have met and worked with many writers, but Carolyn stands out as the sort who is not only an excellent writer, but an excellent teacher of writing. As you may know, this is a rare thing. Last year, our committee invited Carolyn to Northwestern University to serve as our visiting Writer in Residence.

The duties of the writer in residence at Northwestern are perhaps more demanding than those of other schools. We ask that the writer lead workshops, meet each student in individual conferences to discuss their work, give readings, offer lectures, and be available for a variety of other tasks. Carolyn received nothing but high evaluations from both students and faculty here.

Keep in mind that Carolyn is one of the finest writers working today. Her short stories have gained the most important of the prizes, and I have every confidence that her name will be a household word within the next few years. I urge you to give Carolyn Cooke the Eminence Credential. If you have any further questions or want more information, please feel free to contact me at 773.991.1273 (cell) or 847.491.5595 (office). My email address is b-bouldrey@northwestern.edu.

Sincerely,

Brian Bouldrey

Senior Lecturer

Director, Creative Writing Program

present:



### TALK

"writing longer"
Wednesday, March 3
4:30 P.M.
university hall 201
1897 Sheridan Road

For more information, call 847/491-7294

# READING

Thursday, March 4 7:00 P.M. university hall 201 1897 Sheridan Road reception to follow

Carolyn Cooke's short stories have been featured in The Best American Short Stories and Prize Stories: The O. Henry Awards. Cooke, a winner of fellowships from the National Endowment of the Arts and Yaddo and a graduate of Columbia's MFA program, has published fiction and nonfiction in the Paris Review, Ploughshares, the New England Review, and The Nation. Her diverse journalistic experience includes writing for The Nation, editing for Penthouse, and working "as a muckracker for the Anderson Valley Advertiser, a socialist weekly." Cooke is also a founder of Pacific Community Charter School in Point Arena, California, and frequently writes on school reform issues. She lives in northern California with her husband, a poet, and her two children.



#### UNIVERSITY NORTHWESTERN

IUDD A. AND MARJORIE WEINBERG COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Department of English

It's as if Carolyn Cooke has taken the flattest, most marginal of Dickensian grotesquesity Hall 215 and breathed life in them, removed the gawky grotesquerie, and made of them Telephone: (847) 491-7294 archetypes, stuff of myth.

Fax: (847) 467-1545

And then there is her inimitable style, marked most delightfully with an uning mable @northwestern.edu diction that I'd describe as "New England archaic". "She was a little bantam, round face, skinny as a refugee, knees like knuckles." If not archaic, then surprising, bracing: "The bumps on her arm infatuate Ruth." And if both archaic and surprising, an important effort to resurrect words we need to get closer to: after Mr. Sargent has supped on sherried soup, he takes up his pipe, which stank, pleasantly.

Well, then. It seems that every story by Carolyn Cooke is actually, in all, quite uninventable. And yet here they are, the best kind of stories, generous canvases full of characters, all of whom seem connected and captured in time and space. A thread runs through this collection called "The Bostons" that ties together every story's person, and with the binding together of disparate people comes a flattening and bundling, too, of time and space, so that all these tales seem to be going on at once, and together, even if it were ten years ago in Maine, or ten minutes ago in California. What we enjoy is something akin to a pre-Renaissance painting before artists discovered perspective's brutal normalification (and I have that word under patent). As they enjoyed a wondrous world of floating animals and Biblical characters in modern dress, we take in the generosity of Cooke's Bosch-like Garden of Earthly Delights. In an eternal here, the girls of Bar Harbor who loved hunky Buck are forever holding their drunken memorial for him. Mr. Sargent is always painting his portraits of the Atheneum. Tad is eternally smoking, and the parties and picnics and wakes go on and on. And if they're always going on and on, we no longer have to worry about forgetting them, or their stories, do we?

Please help me welcome the unforgettable, uninventable Carolyn Cooke.



volumes of Best American Gay Fiction, His baith and Religion in the Lives of Gay Men won a Lambda Literary Award and his memoir Monster Adventures in American Machismo, was a Lambda finalist. He is and edited six anthologies, including three a visiting assistant professor in creative Brian Bouldrey has written five books writing at Northwestern University and coedited collection Wrestling with the Angel director of Northwestern's Master's Program in Creative Writing

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Vol. 2, No. 7

April 1986

5100



# IE AVENUE goes shopping / By Kitty Pilgrim

# More Park Avenue Digs

To the Editor:

thousands of commuters, the plans necessary to assure the safety of -entailing aboveground construc-The Metropolitan Transportation 45th and 97th streets in order to repair tunnels that run under the though repairs on these tunnels are road subsidiary, Metro-North) reeral sections of Park Avenue between Avenue to Grand Central Station, Alcently released plans to tear up sev-Authority (and its commuter rail tion-were clearly unacceptable.

president of Metro-North: William Aston, vice president of Metro-North: and Jere Patterson. William Vanden Heuvel, and Irwin Gumley representing the Park Avenue Residents Tunnel Repair Committee. At this meeting, I forcefully urged Metro-North to alter its plans so as to ging up and disrupting of Park Avenue. Members of the committee described the problems residents would face and proposed various alternative approaches. Chairman nically possible, he will do everychairman of the MTA; Peter Stangl, avoid, wherever possible, the dig-Kiley assured us that, If It Is techgency meeting with Robert Kiley, As a result, I convened an emer-

thing in his power to keep the project entirely underground.

-Roy M. Goodman, State Senator

## Private Schools

To the Editor.

As a parent, educator and both independent school and college board of trustee member, I would like to respond to "Going Private," February on THE AVENUE].

Many parents and other would-be experts and advisers look to articles such as this for information which



indeed frequently are the sum total of their research. Although Dr. Sussman did not "name names." you chose to-but selectively. You exmay influence their opinions and cluded a number of competitive and ine schools, Now for some people,

your list will become the list of acceptable schools.

please think more carefully about Print is a very powerful mediathe effect of your articles.

-Wendy Levey Director, Epiphany Community Nursery School

To the Editor:

private schools: You also left out one In your article on private schools of the girls' best-Hewitt: Just you left out Buckley School-which is considered the best of the boys' thought you'd like to know for future reference on this subject.

-(Mrs.) Sally Parsons Oriel

# People Without Homes

To the Editor.

ity and thoughtful compassion. It is the most dramatic social problem of shadows of our great wealth, and on the very streets where we reside in unprecedented affluence, there wander the hungry, the homeless see that they do not remain hope-You are correct in pointing out that Your editorial, "People Without Homes, is addressed with sensitivour immediate present. In the very and the helpless. But it is for us to less. Your editorial addresses that tive. To be fully human means that we cannot stand aside with indifference. Much has been done, but so much more needs to be done. to be labeled an idealist ought not theme with a quiet moral impera-

to be a badge of shame but, rather, a medal of honor. For only as we honor the personhoods of those who have less, do we truly exalt the divinity of our own humanity.

-Ronald B. Sobel. Congregation Emanu-El Senior Rabbi.

To the Editor.

ple Without Homes," February on THE AVENUE]. Subsequently, you [should] make mention of the yupple contribution to the cause. Young lawyers from nearly a dozen bluechip law firms have collaborated with the Coalition in its representation of homeless people. A piece on their work would make a nice coun-Thank you for your editorial ["Peoter point to the current editorial.

Coalition for the Homeless -Robert M. Hayes,

To the Editor:

dent and pungent. I greatly hope that I am glad to see the editorial "People Without Homes." It is timely, pru--The Rev. John Andrew, D. D. it will have some effective response.

To the Editor:

Saint Thomas Church

the plight of homeless individuals AVENUE is to be commended for its forthright and timely editorial on in our community.

caring. Our experience at the Lenox I must differ with your characterzation of Upper East Siders as un-

Continued on page 22

On The Avenue is a division of Avenue Magazine, Inc., 145 East Pifty-seventh Street, New York, NY 10022. Telephone (212) 758-9517 Judith Price/President and Publisher. Dan Klores/Editor, Carolyn Cooke/Managine/ Editor. Barbara Lish/Art Director, Meg Tweedy/Associale Editor. Kitty Pilgrini/Assistant Editor. Fran Pax/Manulacturing Director Rebecca Felner/Production Manager. Mindy Anderson/Production Services Manager. Paul S. Kramer/Creative Services Manager. Sarah M. Crandall. Diane Mavroudis/Assistant Art Directors. Lynne Rabinowicz/

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APRIL 1986/ON THE AVENUE

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ETTERS

thing in his power to keep the project entirely underground.

-Roy M. Goodman,
State Senator

Drivata Calanla

your list will become the list of acceptable schools.

Print is a very powerful media please think more carefully about the effect of your articles.

to be a badge of shame but, rather, a medal of honor. For only as we honor the personhoods of those t who have less, do we truly exalt the divinity of our own humanity.

### LADIES OF THE BARRIZO

By Carolyn Cooke

Johanna Barlage, 75 years old and fresh from a month of skiling in Aspen. Colorado. emerges from a bank of elevators in the lobby of the Barbizon Hotel. Tanned and trim in a white sweater and slacks, she proceeds to a window seat in the plano bar with all the formality of a woman sitting down at her own kitchen table.

After 43 years of living at the Barlage seems oddly indifferent to two items in the hotel that, in a primmer era, might have caused her to blush. The first is the man in a well-cut suit who is reading a newspaper at the adjacent table; the second is the glass of wine that a waitress sets before her with the confidential information: "Pouilly Fume." (Until the beginning of the current decade, the idea of sitting down for a drink in the Barbizon Hotel-close enough to a man to blow him a kiss-was as easy to Barbizon in the Intermittent company of such women as Liza Minnelli. Candice Bergen and Princess Grace, envision as taking James Dean home

to meet Mother.)

Barlage nods her approval of the wine and turns to her guest. "When

tenants of their rooms. The owners in 1980. Barbilex Associates, offered tenants SI million to relocate. It was an offer the ladies of the Barbizon chose to refuse. "They had to renovate around us." says Barlage, with just a whiff of pride.

In November 1983, KLM, the Dutch airline, bought into the Barbizon. "When KLM came in, things started to pick up," Barlage recalls. "I liked that, of course, because I am Dutch. I take my friends to the Golden Tullp downstairs—of course I have no room to entertain because my room is very small. Some complain about the price. When I got here in 1942 I got a dinner for 85 cents. I remember the man in the restaurant saying. "It will never go above a dollar! But that is a ridiculous attitude because things do change."

Another obvious change at the Barbizon is, of course, the presence of men—like the one at the adjacent



table—who inhabit the revamped atmosphere of the Barbizon as if ... they belonged here. "They opened the hotel to men on Valentine's Day in 1980 or 1981," observes Barlage. "Isn't that nice?"

In the past, Barbizon residents were permitted to receive their beaus in the music room and to entertain them in cubicles (once referred to as "necking booths") off the lounge. But by and large, if men had their place, it was not at the Barbizon.

"Oh, when they let men in—that didn't affect me at all," Insists Barlage, "although maybe there were a few romances. One time I did have a man in my room. The door was wide open. They were painting, and KLM sent around baskets of food



envision as taking James Dean home mental work conveyor to a main to biour him a kiss-was as easy to to meet Mother.

Barlage nods her approval of the wine and turns to her guest. "When gested that I stay at the Barbizon for a week while I looked for an Why should I look for an apartment? came to New York, friends sugapartment. After one day I said,

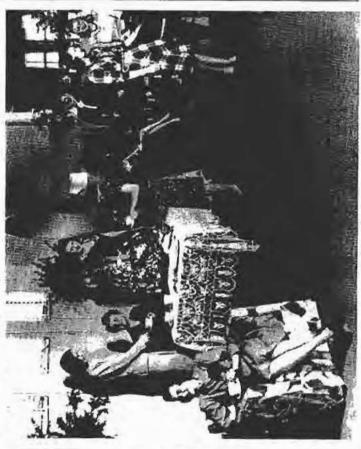
Times have changed, she concedes, since she arrived at the legendary women's hotel in 1942. Back then It was all girls from the Middle West. Parents knew their girls would be safe here. I remember the 4th and 15th floors were all Katherine Gibbs girls. It was very strict-like a campus-with a house mother on every floor. You needed three writ-Barbizon. I originally came from Hol and, so that wasn't easy.

Today, Barlage, a retired office which, as one of the few rentmanager. keeps a 9- by 12-foot room on the eighth floor of the hotel for controlled tenants remaining, she pays \$39.90 a week.

Apart from her modest rent. this longtime resident's tenure at the Barbizon. By the late 1960s, the hotel was finding it increasingly difficult to fill even 40% of its 600 tiny rooms with women who were willing to endure the rigorous hotel was sold and sold again. "We couldn't keep track of all the people though, much has changed during dency there. As profits dipped, the who owned it." Barlage confesses, One way for new owners to boost scrutiny that accompanied a resi-So. a couple of anxious years then."

ten recommendations to get into the and I have been here ever since."

Promotional photographs capture the ladies of the Barbizon, circa 1944



was no place to sit down, that was a few romances. One time I did have a man in my room. The door was wide open. They were painting and KLM sent around basarts of took and liquor-eventhing' So I had a hree of us, eating and drinking. He was very with: I laughed a lot. There the fun of it. But that was the only painter in my room. There were case [of a man in her room]."

didn't affect me at all." insists Barlage, "although maybe there were

with a critical eye. "It's nice, isn't 1?" she says. After 43 years, I haven't Barlage finishes her wine and stands gracefully, surveying the room lost my zest for New York City. This is home. If I have to leave the Barbizon, I will go back to Holland."

There doesn't seem to be any danger of that. For Johanna Barlage, home is only eight floors away.



profits was to relieve rent-controlled



May 2, 1992

#### To whom it may concern:

I am writing this letter of recommendation for Carolyn Cooke and Randall Babtkis in support of their application for teaching positions. I have known and worked with Carolyn and Randall since 1989, and during that time I have found them to be creative and skillful writing teachers and caring and helpful members of the Waring School community. In addition, for three years I served with them both as members of the planning committee for the North Shore Young Writers Conference and was impressed with their competence and hard work which went into making the conference a continued success. Finally, this year I have been fortunate that my eighth grade son Roger has had Carolyn as a math teacher. He has gone from disliking math to finding it one of his favorite subjects. I owe this change primarily to Carolyn's strong teaching and concern for her students. All of us at Waring are sad that they are leaving and are certain they will be an asset to whatever school they choose to teach in.

Carolyn and Randall are marvelous writers. We all love to hear them read their works at an all-school meeting or ourselves read a poem of Randall's or a story of Carolyn's in our school newspaper, *Le Temps Retrouvé*. More than just being poignant and talented writers, however, they are equally skilled at drawing forth the insights of their students. Both have worked with children from grades six to twelve, and they are able to adapt to the needs of each age group. The students in all of their classes emerge learned in the craft of writing and eager to express themselves on paper. In their teaching and in their persons Carolyn and Randall provide models of writers as creative human beings. For example, students still talk of the meeting when Randall took the entire school (ninety-five students and ten teachers) on a silent (amazingly, it was silent) walk through the woods for fifteen minutes and then had us all come back and write about what we had just experienced.

In addition to their fine work as teachers both Carolyn and Randall have served as advisors for many Waring students. The two of them have been outstanding in the concern they have demonstrated for their advisees. They have shown a willingness to work with students as individuals and an ability to communicate with parents, especially with parents of students who may be having personal or academic difficulty, and thus make the school experience a more positive one.

Beyond their fine work as teachers and advisors, Carolyn and Randall have actively participated in one of the important extra-curricular activities of the Waring School. Waring began a writer's conference five years ago for area high school students. When Carolyn and Randall came to Waring four years ago they joined the planning committee for that conference and immediately added their talents to increasing the quality of the event. They were able to tap into their connections in the literary world to offer the students the opportunity to listen to and work with a powerful group of professional authors. The highlight of their four year association for me was their ability to bring Sharon Olds to the conference for a reading and a workshop.

Finally, as a father of a Waring student I have been very pleased to have my son Roger in Carolyn's 7th/8th grade math class. Roger entered Waring this year disliking (no "hating") math and, as is usually the case, having had little success with it. Carolyn entered the year having never taught math and, as is sometimes the case in areas which we are reluctant to teach, feeling little success with herself as a math student. Because the school needed an extra math teacher Carolyn volunteered to take on the beginning level class. She worked hard over the summer and continues to work hard to teach herself how to teach math competently and creatively to reluctant young students. The class was a difficult one, to say the least—most of the students felt the same way as Roger. However, as a result of Carolyn's fine teaching and her ability to motivate children, the class has prospered, and Roger's mathematical skills and mathematical interest have increased tremendously. He thinks Carolyn is a terrific math teacher, he is more and more confident about his own math ability, and he is sad that he will not have her again as a math teacher.

We are all sad that Carolyn and Randall are leaving the Waring School. I will miss them as colleagues and as members of the community, and I recommend them most highly for future teaching positions. Please contact me personally if you need further information.

Sincerely yours,

James G. Watras Assistant Headmaster

James B. Water

777 Valencia Street - San Francisco, CA 94110

WEEKEND COLLEGE

(D) (415)437.3420 · VM (415)241.1300 x362 · FAX (415)865.2636

emeidav@newcollege.edu

January 20, 2005

To Whom It May Concern:

It is with the greatest pleasure that I write to commend Carolyn Cooke for her work as a teacher. In my experience, whether at Yale, The New School for Social Research in New York, Mills College, or at New College of California in San Francisco, Ms. Cooke ranks in the uppermost echelon of teachers whom I have known: she is truly a master teacher. I first came to know Ms. Cooke in 2000, and have been happy to have had her working for our program since 2001.

What Ms. Cooke's consistently high student evaluations attest to are the following qualities: brilliance; ability to analyze and synthesize complex subject matter so that even those students who might find a particular subject challenging are able to comprehend the breadth and depth of a topic; a sensitivity toward issues of diversity and multiculturalism; a true graciousness in her leadership of a classroom; a great gift for crafting interactive syllabi and employing methods of cooperative learning; singular capacities for organization, discernment, and responsibility.

As a person, Ms. Cooke is unfailingly gracious and brings a sense of humor, vast knowledge, and personal engagement to every encounter with student or colleague. She deserves the highest commendation possible. All the above is in addition to her distinctive gifts as a writer and artist, modeling the possibilities of the intellectual and creative life for her students: she is a writer whose work will be remembered, as it is, in my years of experience, quite unique in its attainment.

If you have any questions at all, please feel free to contact me.

Edie Meidav

Sincerelyede

Director

Writing and Consciousness



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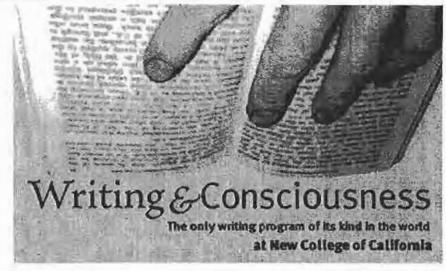
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### Writing & Con

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To contact us p our inquiry for Edie Meiday, Di Core Faculty of Writing & Consi Program, at 415

### WRITING AND CONSCIOUSNESS PROGRAM

### **Our Faculty**

Edie Meiday, Director and Core Faculty Sarah Stone, Core Faculty

Juvenal Acosta Randall Babtkis Carolyn Cooke Indira Ganesan Eric Martin Melinda Misuraca Jaime Robles Brian Teare Jervey Tervalon

The Writers Center

#### Edie Meiday - Director and Core Faculty

Director and core faculty member Edie Meidav is the author of *The Far Field: A Novel of Ceylon* (Houghton Mifflin), a novel investigating Buddhism, the effects of colonialism, and American blindness, begun while on a Fulbright Fellowship in Sri Lanka.

The Far Field garnered critical acclaim, most recently winning the Kafka Prize for the Best Novel Written by an American Woman, the Los Angeles Times' Best Books of 2001 citation, the Village Voice award for Writers on the Verge, as well as an Emerging Writer award from the Vermont Studio Center. It was previously excerpted in

### WRITING AND CONSCIOUSNESS

### WRITING AND CONSCIOUSNESS PROGRAM

#### Mission Statement

Founded in 1998, the Writing and Consciousness program at New College of California has already become an alternative to the traditional and more conventional approaches to the teaching of creative prose writing in the United States. The Writing and Consciousness curriculum has been designed with the belief that writing does not occur in a social vacuum. Our core courses, critical theory seminars, and workshops approach writing as an organic entity existing beyond the distinctions and hierarchies inscribed in literary genres and the Western canon. We view writing as something personal, intimately connected to both reader and writer, potentially subversive, dangerous to common sense and conventional wisdom, and rich with the possibility for imagining different approaches to life and creation. The Writing and Consciousness program offers the aspiring writer and independent scholar the possibility of obtaining a graduate degree (MA and/or MFA) as he or she writes a book pertinent to both writer and reader. Writing is not something that critics and professors own, but a heritage of human consciousness to be created, shared, criticized and exercised with passion, hard work, and responsibility, so that we as a single human tribe can move toward a better understanding of ourselves and the reality in which we live.

#### WRITERS' CENTER

A monthly series and resource dedicated to connecting students, authors, and the greater community, located in the heart of San Francisco's Mission District. Selected students are frequently paired with visiting and local authors in sharing public readings and panels. Authors and past visiting faculty have included. Andrei Codrescu, Michelle Tea, Thaisa Frank, Kim Addonizio, Elizabeth Rosner, and Lisa Schiffman, among many others.

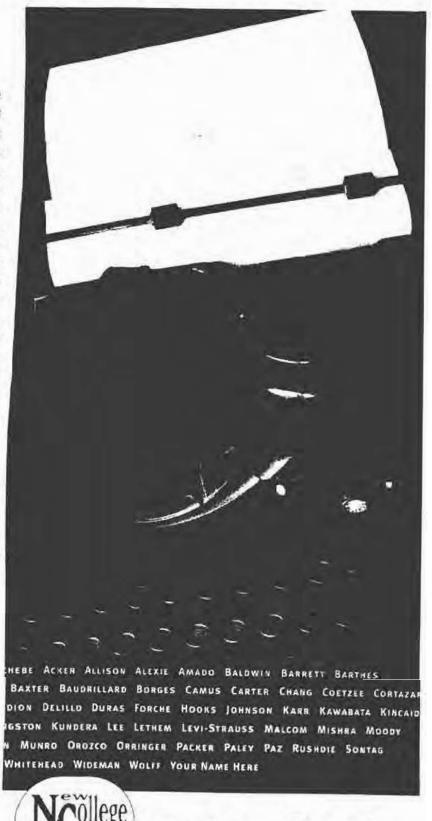
#### OUR FACULTY

Composed of published writers and editors, both active and attentive, including Juvenal Acosta, Carolyn Cooke, galla Devlin, Eric Martin, Edie Meidav, Melinda Misuraca, Jaime Robtes, Sarah Stone, Julie Young

WRITING AND CONSCIOUSNESS M.A. I M.F.A.

777 Valencia Street | San Francisco, California 94110

For more info contact Edie Meidav 415-437-3434 | emeidav@newcollege.edu



www.newcollege.edu

### Carolyn Cooke 25524 Ten Mile Road P.O. Box 462 Point Arena, California 95468

March 22, 2005

Edye Ipsaro California Commission on Teacher Credentialing Box 944270 1900 Capitol Avenue Sacramento, California 94244-2700

Dear Edye,

As we discussed the other day, please find enclosed recent student evaluations for my courses in Critical Theory and Craft of Fiction at New College of California/San Francisco's M.F.A. Writing Program. (You also have a letter on my behalf from Edie Meidav, the Kafka Prize-winning novelist who directs the program.) These evaluations (together with Edie's letter) might be used to support the claim that I have developed particularly innovative curriculum and am an effective teacher. I'm particularly proud of my work on the Critical Theory course, for which I developed a course-specific Reader which is now the standard for the College. My course also created a new context for wide-ranging and popular student talks on such themes as: Pre-Columbian Poetry; Literature from The Chicano and Black Power Movements of the 1970s; The Relation between Technology and Angst from Aristotle to the Present; the Existential Connection Between "Self" and "Other"; the Literary Legacies of Colonialism. Theory may sound dry, but my course is one of the most sought-after in the program – challenging, informative and exciting, as these evaluations attest.

I've also enclosed copies of evaluations from my students at Pacific Community Charter School. The comments here too support a claim that my curriculum is challenging, unique and effective in generating student work of exceptional quality. The letter you have from Yolanda Highhouse, Director of the Program, also speaks to this.

Hope this is helpful. As always, please feel free to give me a call if you have further questions. I look forward to meeting the Commission on May 31st or June 1st.

Carolyn Cooke

Best regards,

DEAR ABBY DZ WEDDINGS DZ TRAVEL D3

"My whole raison d'etre in life is this collision between classes because I really identify with all of them — I feel rage toward all of them and identify with them."

CAROLYN COOKE, author, teacher





# Nr1ter

**Unminating the** author Carolyn Cooke's short Point Arena stories are known for

Photos by JOHN BURGESS

THE PRESS DEMOCRAT

"I'm like a bulldog," says author Caroto look at her, you'd never know it. Ivn Cooke.

Coast friends would say that's what 15 years on green tea in her Point Arena living room over-Sitting with legs crossed, sipping Cooke seems mellow and relaxed. Her East looking the Pacific Ocean, the diminutive he West Coast will do to you.

says. "And I don't let go. I like a good fight." "I'm little, but I'm really tenacious," she

It's less a warning than a matter-of-fact stateerect a charter school in her tiny coastal hamment, as she describes her seven year fight to

rich and poor

rift between

much the same way. Unsuspecting and oddly subliminal, the spare narratives often illumi Her short stories confront and surprise in

nate deep rifts between people who have spent their entire lives together. When her short-stocritics were drawn to the bleak New England ry collection "The Bostons" debuted in 2001, cast of grotesque characters.

A Los Angeles Times reviewer said of her stories, "They ring with gunshots, failed suicides praising her knack for "seeing the world at an and cracked bones. To use one of the author's York Times Book Review compared her to felfavorite words, they are pungent." The New low short story writer and poet Grace Paley angle and keeping the reader off balance."

Cooke is most interested in grounding her char But, beyond ironic twists and dying wishes, acters in a society where class mobility is almost impossible.

them and identify with them," said Cooke, 46. sion between classes because I really identify "My whole raison d'etre in life is this colli with all of them - I feel rage toward all of

TURN TO WRITTER, BACK PAGE

## CAROLYN COOKE

Residence: Point Arena

Family: Husband, poet Randall Babtkis, 14-year-old son and 11-year-old daughter.

Profession: Author, teaches writing at the New College in San Francisco.

(2001), featuring several stories anthologized in "Best Short Stories" and "O. Henry Prize Stories" collections, Los Angeles Times and New York Times. named one of 2001's best books by the Claim to Fame: "The Bostons

lellowship, including \$35,000-a-year Awards: 2002 PEN/Bingham grant for 2 years. Jp next: New novel "Daughters of the Revolution" — a New England tale of sex and co-education in the '70s."

### Save a mother, save her baby

ny things. But oushing strollwough their ome friends d Dawn did rs who bethese two

se many moth



your baby might die if you continue to smoke "You'd think that if someone said you and crack, that you would get clean.

Carrie looks over at



# TRENDS

# the mommy rat rac Rebelling against

WASHINGTON POST By HANNA ROSIN

the carpet by the Sheridan School's door is WASHINGTON

bucket, awaiting artful arra ittle coffee chat in the libra dozen or so Sheridan moms Martin's first idea was to showing the day's wear

lips are still crammed in a t

punch bowls need washing,

# themselves vital part of community WRITER: Literary couple have made

### CONTINUED FROM PAGE DI

Cooke slowly awakened to the class divide so inherent to American resort "roughed it" by staying in rived every summer, Bar Harbor was communities. Her grandfather was a dame came around." A rustic play-ground for Brahmin families who ar-Growing up on the coast of Maine, and she heard stories about how her gardener at "one of the big estates" mother had to hide when "the macabins and cutting wood for heat. where they

community that kept the mechanisms cushions while waitressing at the Pot and Kettle. And she was struck by the play at self-sufficiency." She rememwhat they said or how they delighted As Cooke grew older, she realized she had been born into "the service bers finding their lost coms in the way locals told stories fixating on running so that rich people could "what the rich ate for dinner" or in witty repartee

### Haves and have nots

Including several stories previously tions, "The Bostons" is easily divided where "the Bostons" often summered mugs, father too many babies and ocinto tales of the haves and have nots. In one camp, aging Boston socialites cent living. Then there's the rougher anthologized in "Best Short Stories" They drink hard liquor out of coffee and "O.Henry Prize Stories" collecbarrel of a gun, mistake their wives crowd that dwells in coastal Maine casionally, while looking down the fear the slow endgame of convales-

ing more every day. She and her hus Point Arena with the dream of writwhen she moved with her family to Point Arena and flew from New En-Class politics was a social theme Cooke planned to cultivate further band, Randall Babtkis, a poet and teacher, saw an ad for 10 acres in gland to see it.

Son" author Denis Johnson, who tout Green Party Mayor Raven Earlygrow. ed the rugged coastline as an ideal set adding electricity, they renovated the sold. The house they would buy was two-story cabin on a ridge overlook-In Gualala, they met with "Jesus" ting for the writer's life. They were Replacing the orange shag rug and the former home of Point Arena ing the Point Arena pier

was the state of education in the local What Johnson failed to mention

Cooke and her husband had taught at the Waring School in Massachupublic school system.

bury Valley School - one of the more principles of the experimental Sudsetts, a prep school founded on the In Point Arena, with a newborn radical schools in the country

baby and another on the way, Cooke Gary Hart Introduced legislation authorizing charter schools - for what would later become the Pacific Com wrote the original draft charter in 1992 - Just after former state Sen. munity Charter School.

this community is and how good it is could be and how interesting the peo "We were really interested in how rigorous an experimental program ple here were and how resourceful ar building things," she said.

nity is sort of a full-time job. Most peo too small for anything to run without ple find you can't just come here and keep your life on the same keel. It's Looking back, "I could have proba-Manhattan," she said. "This commubly written more if I still lived in a lot of help.

Battling opposition for the next sevfinally opened its doors to 70 students gayers - she would serve on the local school board for four years before Paen years to the charter - occasional ly called "the hippie achool" by maycific Community raised \$30,000 and in 1999.

Cooke. "She doesn't mind saying, 'No body if they were making the image of the school less than what she saw It could be," said K-8 director Sigrid "She often has a positive, smiling Hillscan, who worked closely with demeanor, but she would call any. that's not true. We can do these things.

daughter and 14 year-old son both at tend, has received five A-plus audits from the state, adding high-school The school, where her 11-year-old grades two years ago.

the second year (of high school curric-"We don't even have a bathroom in we're candidates for accreditation in the school," Cooke said, "and yet ulum)."

something is literally true or if you made it up, it's just as real as if it hap More than a decade after relocating

pened that way."

you write fiction and in the end, after

you finish, you can't remember if

can illuminate the event or the character that starts to kind of accrue as

have to use anything you have that

### Worked as muckraker

editorial assistant for syndicated jour-'muckraker" for the Anderson Valley Cooke worked for several years as an nalist Alexander Cockburn and as a To make ends meet as a writer, Advertiser newspaper.

days when the local credit union first

opened and the stacks of new money

reeked of marijuana. She's seen the class divisions between the service

and listens to the stories around her

She's heard tales about the early

lives. Like any writer, she observes

write about the region where she to Point Arena, Cooke has yet to

> "I used to say that moving here bagan the slow process of making our-Once a month, Cooke makes the selves unemployable," she said

economy and nearby Sea Ranch com-

write about this area without carica-

munity. And yet, "it's really bard to

are so extreme," she said. "When peo turing people because the characters

master of fine arts "Writing and Con-

trek to San Francisco to teach in the

pie invent themselves, they sort of become fictions in a way.

sciousness" program at the New Col-

lege. Reluting her experiences to de-

veloping writers, she recommends

stealing whatever you can - and "In my stories, I use anything !

then making it your own

A short hike through the woods from her Point Arusa home leads auther Carolyn Cooks to her writing studio, above, who

PLOUGH SHIPTING BURGESTAT

is working on her latest book. Below, Cooke and her poet husband, Randall Babtitis, teach a writing class for high school

students at Pacific Community High Charter School, which they helped establish in Point Avens.

to get at in fiction, but it takes a long ing dynamics here that I would love There are a lot of really interesttime, partly because it's not a really Not long after "The Bostons" was named one of the best books of 2001 to of people kind of act instead of verbal culture in a lot of ways. . . .

use stuff I know; but it isn't my farm

need," she said. "I use my family,

ly, and the people in the book aren't

always people I know. I think you

"Daughters of the Revolution" - a by both the Los Angeles Times and the New York Times, Cooke received ing for several years on her new nov-New England tale of "sex and co-edua PEN/Bingham award and a \$35,000 grant for two years. She's been work cation in the "70s."

mer, and her editors are growing a litall the acclaim for her debut abort-story collection, she remains humble at takes me a long time to write." After was supposed to come out this sum-The second installment in a twobook deal with Houghton Mifflin's Mariner Books division, the novel the restless. All she will say is "i

be a writer when I grow up. I want to mean, I hope I'm a writer. I want to "I hope I'm a novelist," she said, pausing before correcting herself, the feet of the muse.



be able to write anything. I was able to make a story out of any

You can reach Staff Writer Joh beck@pressdemocrat.com. at 521-5300 or e-mail at

# THE REDWOOD COAST

Volume 1, Number 2

A Publication of Friends of Coast Community Library in Cooperation with the Independent Coast Observer

### published ooks As Yet ON WRITING

rees? Are they fish?) But having

contact with other kids, many of

cids has also led me into closer

whom here experience humilia-

ion and failure rather than suc-

cess in school, and are encour-

aged by social services and

the people trying to save the red-

charged friend cry. Look at all

selfish reasons: I have kids.

(Alta! I hear my politically

woods and the salmon. Are they

nething has happened to me here a writer, in this place called the seing coast, and I think it's

on the Earth and its particular ing random, our

hough the early editions of it affects those who smger here. This Lyer Press are collectors' Mendocino has a genius of ed books

Press, begins to address the issu Water, Air and Fire, from Por local publishers who have Mendocino County won

adia and in ensets bare and enffer-

Let kids be volunteers, not captives relocated to Eureka from Albion, and has of always show up in printa long publication backlist of local poets. Other this area are Gorda Pent Press, based in and Pygmy Frest Press, which recently Sponded to Mendocino, OF Press in Fort Bragg, Yet there is work heard on the local or anthology of beside the Pacific Ocean. tems, and the

school. If enough kids are failing

for their "failure"-anyone but

families, their lack of "values"

in school or rejecting it altogeth-

er, isn't it our responsibility to

examine the needs, rethink

school and offer other ways, so

that our kids can, in the lovely

words of John Taylor Gatto,

school to blame themselves, their

Rethinking School

good idea; it's a great idea-a rich, who, according to historian Samuel Eliot Morrison, "thought t intolerable that they should be free public education were the crucial idea. It's instructive to

"volunteer for the kind of educaree public education isn't a tion that suits them"?

remember that early opponents of

years, constitutes for me a solid core of regional writers. These writers have developed styles which don't always resemble each other, yet thoughton common lodestone proce up of ruby slabs of redwood, peptified under the various pressures of coastal life.

For my celf, the effect this region has had on my york is not the effect a place of birth would have. The insides of my soul are more deeply marned in that way by the view of Mount Tamalpais seen through a living room window, and weekends at Drake's Beach, body furfing until numb, then running pert, as if laughing and nose-peellag were the same verb, to thaw by earlitwood fire. Instead, Mendo no came into my bloodstream at the monent of becoming less of the child and more of the woman, not yet the poet.

Writers who the here come from all

The world, and after its redwood

wenticeship, often return here:

The Ball, Colombia, the farmorthern

the sof Canada, New York suburbs,

panic neighborhood of Los Angeles.

Thing their parious cultural mixes

I childhood archetypes, which interact

the environment, producing novels

and epicstand terse commentaries on

public and orivate life.

For a long time, I thought that the trees had something to do wear, it has this transformation agent, if scrutinized under a microscope, would have the cellular structure of wood, and that this could be the way to detect a poem, or a novel or a short story written under its influence. I felt that perhaps the trees with their tragic contemporary lastory, were experiencing a kind of Afological alarm clock

See UNINGBLISHED page 3

cially those who don't go. Lately I've exciting, effective schools out of the most been thinking about schools, and find Taylor Gatto, Herb Kohl, Jonathan Kozo have worked in some of the worst public myself particularly drawn to writers rage turned them into visionaries. Some and teachers who have urgent and angry and Deborah Meier, among others, who class kids, too-be destroyed by school, schools in America, who have watched kids-especially poor kids, but middleteacher-writers have in common is this: of them went on to envision and create ike the idea of school. Most kids I know like the idea of school, espeeducation in America, people like John miscrable hell-holes. More later on the things to say about the state of public and destroyed for life. What these visions, but first, the local news.

A politically charged friend called the other day and asked why my kids don't go to school. "I thought it was just Christian right-wingers who stay home," he chuckled, a classic case of the absurdity (at least here) of the left calling the right a "wing" and singling out one group from the polyglot of dissatisfied customers of the national curriculum who, whatever else we have in common, don't necessarily associate education with

This friend, interestingly, is intoxicated by politics. He makes his living eviscerating the power structure in livid prose; he is a champion of working people; his kid went to private school. To him, I think, public schools are less vile than other nations' repositories for underprivileged youth—say, the maquiladoras of Mexico

and the sweatshops of Taiwan—and his sympathies veer naturally toward those precocious students of life who spend Monday through Saturday adhering soles to Nikes. He's content to leave the details of American schooling—brownie-baking, boosterism, the driving, the striving!—to the PTA and the soccer moms.

earning is still seen by many as an eccenthe state has even managed to appropriate for many students who learn at home. But for something of real value for the dollars ools are for "all the kids" -not for yours. pendently than school allows. Try asking ric and possibly masochistic choice, and enough said. Isolating yourself is by now school, or would like to work more indeworkshops, working microscopes, access schools can still earn attendance monies school to adapt to the growing numbers your kid brings into the school districtsuch an acceptable form of protest that to computers or pottery wheels. Those Keeping your kids at home for their ry organizing, banding together with other parents and asking formally for "Home Study" as a program, so that of kids who can't or won't work in

Any protest against school as it is, any question of its claim to be a necessary agent of "socialization" (that weirdly sinister term), is still seen by many otherwise sane citizens not as a reasonable choice, given the alternatives, but as a rebuke to everyone else. To suggest that school might work better for more kids if it were in any way different is seen as selfish, elitist and un-American.

Like many of the people locally who are agitating for a charter school in Point Arena, I am in it for the basest and most

of sending their children. To this argument the poor replied with votes, and reformers with the tempting argument that education was insurance against radicalism."

property taxes that support private-school and most effective insurance against radi package pretty much as it is. Most workmarginalize those who do-slough them good idea, and since the rich still do, by per year in affluent districts, as opposed schools still do function as the cheapest spending levels (about \$12,000 per kid Christians, wild Indians or drug-addled schools, or live in school districts with off as malcontents, elitists, right-wing Since free public education is still a ing parents don't-because they can't afford to-complain, and our schools people are content to leave the whole calism society has yet invented, most Elementary), and since most public and large, send their kids to private to about \$4,000 a year at Arena

lic school makes clear (has anyone sought your "input" lately?), schools are the gov-Anyway, as the jargon around any pubbooks, tools and teachers. For better and groups of kids don't thrive in school, or providing equal access for everyone to idea. So, go bake a pan of brownies for state in service of the excellent goal of worse, schools are the real collectivist work, the early and usually permanent the PTA, girl! But wait, what happens everyone? What happens when whole appropriation of young people by the ernment's, and not the community's when public schools don't work for when they just won't go?

See SCHOOL page 2

## EDITOR'S NOTE

### Bridging the Gap

concerting aspects of life on the Gualala) as a gathering place by effetely bourgeois reactionary squares defending seems to exist between the communities ne of the more curious and dispegs Joint Arena as an enclave of wildof Point Areng and Gualala. You know 1960s, and Gualata (including The Sea Ranch, whose residents do usiness in south Mendocino coast is the mutually reinforcing stereotypes that eyed unwashed over-the-hill hippies what we're falking about: that set of cultural and psychological gulf that timewarped in the last gasps of the an expired status quo.

yet the mutual distrust and disdain generaled by suck heartfelt if unspoken prejudices would love to see some mental recognition are pointonous to the public health. There's rivalry, burthis crypto-cold war, like other dangerously ridiculous. These of us affilistretch or gorgeous land and common culogue and debat on how best to serve the Stereotypes, exaggerations, caricatures; forms of nationalism and xenophobia, is acknowledgment that we share the same City Art, Gualala Arts, the Arena Theatre ated with both sides of this sient divide many others. We logger for forthright diaand Coast Community Library, among needs of the region's learners, thinkers, nothing wrong with a little crosstown of artistic and organizational integrity, tural institutions-like Point Arena

SCHOOL from page 1

Communities do have the power to rethink their local schools, to make local decisions that make sense. As Deborah Meier, a passionate defender of excellent public schools for disadvantaged students, writes, "Schooling is a part of child rearing. It's the place where society formally expresses itself to young people on what matters." And it's true: what school is like now for students who go will largely determine what kind of people will be running the community when we're all walking around on two sticks.

I know, rivets a soul or two on the commu-Codes and old classroom copies of Bantam Chool boards do, to some extent, decide Owhat matters in local schools, although occasionally taped on video, which, for all sion. They do it a couple of times a month ibrary, surrounded by plastic-cased issues many gallons of water it takes to drown a in the fluorescent glow of the high school put cell phones on the buses are recorded shelved volumes of the West's California football field of gophers and whether to hey do it more by default than by decipaperbacks. Their ruminations on how on tapes no one ever listens to and are of Seventeen and Car and Driver and nity-access channel.

For the four years I served on the Arena Elementary School board, we never once discussed educational philosophy or curriculum, though board members occasionally expressed frustration about why we were always too busy to, well, formally express what matters. The truth is, we were too busy with the immediate task of maintaining the status quo. (What if the Homecoming queen broke her stiletto heel, or her leg, in a gopher

Education is not the curriculum itself, but the individual's active and personal process of responding to books or ideas shaped by reading, writing, conversation and thinking.

to build these brave new souls, these Reader Rabbits and Algebra Blasters.)

The truth is that the aim of most public schools is very different from the aim of education; school may be compulsory, but education is a choice. School may rather arbitrarily turn a child toward the choice to become an educated person, or turn her to become an educated person, or turn her away from it. So schools of fish swim together, right or wrong, not out of love for their fellow fish, not necessarily in the

rust families and trust kids in meaningful

ways from an early age.

curriculum works for every child. They

enowledge matters, that no method or

The following books may be of interest to families who are rethinking school.

All are available at the reference desk at Coast Community Library:

Brook, James and Iain Boal. Resisting the Virtual Life. San Francisco: City Lights, 1995.

Gatto, John Taylot. Dumbing Us
Down: The Hidden Curriculum of
Compulsory Schooling. Philadelphia:
New Society Publishers, 1992.
Greenberg, Daniel. The Sudbury Valley
School Experience. Framingham,

to books or ideas, shaped by reading, writing, conversation and thinking, and other mysterious matters embedded in the DNA. It can't be done to anyone, much less to groups of 20, 30 or 40 students at a time.

Good public schools are certainly more exciting places than private schools, espe-Second Community School, a few charter and, for public high schools, the National Coalition of Essential Schools (modeled on ideas developed by Ted Sizer). There hough most swim in a certain directionschools in Massachusetts and California extremely urban or extremely rural. I'm East School, San Francisco's Clarendon are many others, all different, of course, hey are schools, after all. All share the education, what makes a great school? So given that school can't guarantee hinking about Harlem's Central Park cially when their location is extremedea-the elitist idea, you might sayhat the individual matters, that self-

exhibitions of students' skill and mastery ively in cross-age groups. Not everyone define themselves by age and grade, and studies the same thing at the same grade through an integrated curriculum (litera-What else? Students are less likely to end to work independently or cooperaure and history in Spanish and English; Academic periods tend to be longer-at and age. Assessment is complex, more east an hour, ideally two hours. Fewer science and art; math and music, etc.). multiple-choice tests come second to Decisions about curriculum, teaching subjects are taught more thoroughly qualitative than quantitative, and

C&CA 4A-82

# THE REDWOOD COAST

STEPHEN KESSLER Editor

Production Associate Production Director DOROTHY RUEF CAROL WHITE

cooperation with the Independent Coast THE REDWOOD COAST REVIEW is published by Friends of Coast Community Library in beever. The opinions expressed in these is are those of the individual writers and quarterly (January, April, July and October) or the advertisers. Contents copyright necessarily reflect the views of FOCCI, REDWOOD COAST REVIEW AL to outhors on publication.

companied by a fiction and poetry to the 'OOD COAST REVIEW, C/O address and phone 4 page. Your work your submissions. Please send 7, Gualalo, CA 95445. typed, double spaced,

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Ubrary is a ion. Tax-2 Coast

> STRANGE. You t

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Durg 15 TSIMIL.

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to roots v

Slown II

ing administrative direction, usually try to Spanish. Why? (Because the state offers a Decisions are made outside the context of a sense of choice. (Who's going to offer a Language is more important than philososchool culture or philosophy, and without elementary school, to lecture students on ohy or Latin, that it's more important, in School boards do their best and, followavoid conflict and go for the free money grant to teach Descartes or astronomy?) thousand bucks a year for "tobacco use he evils of smoking than it is to teach education." Spanish is a "gray area.")

sending your kids to school are the same arguments schools make to show they're they'll have to know how to be competiive and obedient, how to shift arbitrarily for them to learn how to get along in the at the sound of a bell) from one activity to another. Plenty of working people use Ironically, the best arguments against 'socialized," you're told; it's important necessary. It's important for kids to get "real" (read "hostile") world where these lessons every day.

immediate future we'll need fewer human ole. (Computers in the classroom are said worker bees in his hive-says that in the em solvers, adaptable people, smart peorobots and more creative thinkers, probage? The middle-aged computer geeks ! drum roll, please-in the postindustrial dea of a social revolution based on the cnow have pretty well given up on the valance sheets of Apple and IBM, but Are such lessons really necessaryeven Bill Gates-who has plenty of

Framingham, MA: Sudbury Valley School Press, 1994.

Kohl, Herbert. Should We Burn Babar? Herbert Kohl are also available at New York: The New Press, 1995. (Many other books of interest by the library.)

Kozol, Jonathan. Death at an Early Age. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1967.

Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations. New Lasch, Christopher. The Culture of York: Norton, 1978.

Ideas: Lessons for America from a Meier, Deborah. The Power of Their Small School in Harlem. Boston: Beacon Press, 1995.

Compromise: The Dilemma of the American High School. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1984. Sizer, Theodore. Horace's

School. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, Sizer, Theodore. Horace's School: Redesigning the American High

right direction, but in the same direction, to avoid the personal peril of swimming

though. The Latin root of the word educators.) Education, in other words, is not the active and personal process of responding individual. (The ability to read, write and passions and prejudices that animate the work with numbers are just early indication means to "draw out" the particular curriculum itself, but the individual's Thinking people do swim alone,

extent possible.

TOTAL IN CREATION.

were series well-intentioned school board

5

.....

did decide, once, that American Sign

Boreaming to mic juliesi

in the methods and tools they use to reach curriculum engages kids' natural curiosity students because teachers (and sometimes schools individual differences are respectfamilies. These schools are free and pubto all the children who use them. In such with parents, grandparents and extended lic in the true sense; they belong equally in their historic, geographic and cultural responsibility for students' success. The Teachers also enjoy greater autonomy roots, and works as closely as possible Students, teachers and families share parents) together manage the school. ed, and every "wing" belongs.

Charter Schools Act, feel so urgent to me take up most of the time I used to spend today's best-organized efforts at real Rural Challenge (designed to revitalize rural schools and communities) and the hat thinking about school has come to school reform, such as the Annenberg These ideas, which are at the root of homeschooling with my children.

Even given the prejudice here against any Happiness was a great movie-and about half were dangerously offended by it. We hrashed our differences out for a minute Sometimes I feel almost unable to see any idea outside of its relation to school. Happiness, for example, which screened recently at the Arena Theatre (don't take scene and the lights came up. The audience instantly broke into vivid reaction. the kids), a reel broke during a painful experience that might be "negative," in the middle of Ted Solondz's film about half the audience thought

See SCHOOL page 6

35500 Shoreline Higi Iway VIV

### Morning

am covered with bread crumbs and you kiss me so sweetly. a stick of butter in my hand you come into the kitchen, and cinnamon, This morning

two fluttering things that have come together like two gnomes, we are standing two bees, to be

flying still on the ground,

owly and splatter the floor. rge melting drops fall id the butter . . .

-PAMELA MISHKIN

# CHOOL from page 2

worlds. If any arbitrary gathering of people for the purpose of experiencing some set of ideas and reacting to them individtion that the ideal school might have just school. I left Happiness with the convicas the broken reel spun in the half-light: there redemption? Then the lights went What is "realism"? Is life this grinn? Is ually is a potential school, this was a down and we returned to our solitary the capacity of a movie theater.

so that we'll meet our societal obligations

ing claims on the limits of such choice,

choose between them, since no two will be alike. We'll have to confront compet-

have to face the right of youngsters to

sen, autonomous communities, we'll

choice. Once we create small, self-cho-

writes, "A call for small schools turns out to be intimately connected with a call for Power of Their Ideas, about her experi-School in Harlem, thinks so too. She Deborah Meier, whose book The ence running the Central Park East

# BOOKS from page 5

that crunch. Online was another story re would be low than the little money, with it one of the few places where selecplaced in the ICO letting le potential impact of their tion is not determined by corporate intergot Inline. Small stores had been in trounn and Barb felt iswas time to let peoclicking Gualala Books would close and quences had not been explained to them. ng so remote, Gualala Bloks had not ks thought it was easy to buy a book habits. The graph of fallen they though they saved. In March ple know that if they kept clicking lots or some years from the big chains with the click of a moule. The consesales made it obvious that if they kept ing into their neighborhoods, but begun about the time that Amazon, 8 an ad wa book

was close to becoming obsolete in our area est. The possibility of browsing in a store and, if things kept up, in the world at Long

The community responded. Many folks hanked them for explaining us situation in the community to keep the and have faithfully kept or fing books. One gentleman who wo , trying not to be overly Ey feel that there is a com-An cautiously watched place orders via e-man, as easy through Gualala Books as frough the competi-Kanch began to But it may take more than has a home on the Sea purchases. tion. Barb and M as sales crept optimistic. mitment for store ha

by community members. It would not be to keep the presence of a bookstore here. something like a community corporation with a board of directors and stock held a money-making venture but an attempt Lynn thinks it may mean setting up

negotiations with the district and with the of their knowledge and competence rather than accumulating 'seat-time' (credits) or reports. "We committed ourselves openly ble 'exhibitions.' This last idea, now popmended, on the basis of publicly accessiand loudly to being different, to keeping dents to prepare tangible demonstrations folio-based graduation, requires our stureminds us that such exhibits had a long childhood education, and to graduating ularly known as performance or portmitzvahs, Boy Scout rituals, Red Cross alive the ideas and spirit of good early Coalition of Essential Schools recomand honorable tradition, including bar grades on multiple choice tests. Sizer Central Board of Education," Meir our students, as Sizer and the ...

together to create a community should be

volunteers not captives."

acknowledge that where no competing

to equity and diversity. We must

claims are greater the people who join

Minteresting for anyone who has been

eier's book will be particularly

part of the protracted and Kafkaesque

struggle to create a true community

school in Point Arena, or who would like

school here might be like. "We began to find out more about what a charter

ople are not responding to the corporate carry the torch of civilization forward." possibility of backlash against global corainwashing, and those will be the ones the store were to disappear, Barb adds, iere's so little available of diversity, of atization. "People will get fed up and ne of the diversity of products. When strated with big box stores that have a book, that's a real problem. Some wn. She's also optimistic about the It could be a place where ideas come from the bottom up, not from the top edom of the press. Community. the last bastio

business, Barb and Lynn are keeping the stormy marketplace after a decade in ered veterans of the spark alive. Laura Schatzberg is a south coast writer, soapmaker and bookseller.

ests, and doctoral committees."

The question here in Point Arena is the Deborah Meier: "How the children at the bought privately for their own children." bottom of America's social ladder could use their schools to develop rather than stunt their intellectual potential, how to provide at public expense for the least advantaged what the most advantaged same as it was in Harlem in 1974 for

things of real value for our kids-freeand choices-with public money, here dom, respect, challenge, opportunities Who says we can't provide these and now? We can. Carolyn Cooke's first book of stories, The Bostons, will be published next year by Houghton Mifflin.

### Plans developing for new Charter High School

By Kathryn Gleason

More than 40 students and parents gathered at Pacific Community Charter School last Friday to discuss the possibilities of opening a Charter High School next fall.

After watching a video on effective models of alternative high schools, the students and parents split up to discuss what they would like to see in a new school.

According to parent and high school committee member Carolyn Cooke. the students reported wanting a flexible program that included project based learning, travel opportunities, internships, and a program that would meet the needs of both college and trade bound students.

"They want a democratically run school that's mostly run by students," Cooke said, admitting that this was indeed revolutionary thinking, "We're looking at graduation based on mastery of skills, demonstrated through public exhibitions and judged by peers. That way students learn how to present and demonstrate their mastery, much like they will havetadoin the real world.! Students won't earn credit simply by showing up, they earn credit by demonstrating their mastery of a subject."

Both students and parents expressed their desire to be closely connected to PAHS. "It is important to the students to have a relationship with PAHS students, that they have opportunities to mingle and work side by side, said Cooke, "We would like to create a sort of porous boundary, where students could conceivably choose - See High School Per A A A OS

schools and use the resources of each."

It seems as though the Point Arena Schools District is in favor of creating a new school as well. "I've never seen such a climate of support and friendship." said Cooke, who struggled for many years with the District before Pacific Community Charter School became a reality.

Superintendent Mark Incumiello is very much in favor of the new school. "We're excited about having more alternative choices for students in the district so their can be an enrichment of programs here in our community." Incuaniello said. "Certainly our goal is that this shouldn't be viewed as a threat, it should be a collaborative effort. We want to be enthusiastic and supportive, this would be a real win for the community and the schools."

lacuaniello was instrumental in creating a more cohesive climate for the three high schools in Mendocino, "People used to think it was a joke, that we had so many schools for 300 students, but having a variety of choices really ads to the climate rather than taking away."

lacuaeniello said that although the P.A. Schools board has not made a formal decision on the plan, unofficially board members seem to be in support of the plan, Administrators are even looking into the possibility of locating the Charter H.S. on PAHS grounds in order to better facilitate an easy exchange of classes and support.

One of the major concerns of prospective Charter School students was that they wanted to be able to play sports on PAIIS teams. According to lacuaniello, PAHS administration is amiable to that idea, and is planning to facilitate a waiver process through the California Interscholastic Federation, which governs school sports, in order to make this possible. "Certainly we would support that and try to make it happen,

Iacuaniello said, Open enrollment for the Charter High School will begin in April, and Cooke reports that they will need at least 20-25 students in order to move ahead with the plan. The high school committee is meeting weekly, and interested students and parents are encouraged to get involved. For more information, contact Sigrid at the Charter School, 882-4131.

### PEN/Bingham Award Seeds City-Style Arts and Lectures Series in Rural Northern California

Entering the foggy coastal hamlet of Point Arena, California, the words "literary life" do not instantly spring to mind. This one-hill town 100 miles north of San Francisco is one of the smallest incorporated cities in the country — around 462 urchin divers, loggers, Native Americans from the coast Pomo reservation, surfers, migrant workers and back-to-the-landers. But thanks to the first PEN/Bingham Fellowships, a project of [Joan Bingham, editor at Grove Press], Point Arena has one of the hottest lecture series going. In spring 2003 former California poet laureate Quincy Troupe and National Book Award finalist Jane Hirshfield read to packed houses at the 200-seat restored vaudeville house in the center of town. The poets spent three days each in Point Arena, offering craft classes with local students, and meeting formally and informally with community members. Poets visited the creekbed where the San Andreas fault runs out to sea, the river that runs through the two parts of the reservation where the old bridge washed away.

The project is organized as a partnership between PEN and the Pacific Community Charter School, whose students earn academic credit by helping to organize and promote the live performances, reading books by visiting poets, writing critical essays on their lives and works, and hosting craft workshops for students from area schools.

Writer Carolyn Cooke helped organize the project as part of the \$70,000

PEN/Bingham Fellowship she won for her first short story collection, *The Bostons*(Houghton Mifflin, 2001). The Binghams asked winners of the fellowships to

undertake a project that would bring meaningful encounters with writers to underserved communities. "I knew right away what I wanted to do," Cooke says. "I wanted to bring together a large group of people – not a traditional audience for poetry readings, but the whole community – to create a special occasion where everybody heard something together and had a chance to talk about it afterward. I wanted young people to think about what stories they have to tell, to think about writing, about poetry and politics and art."

After the first performance by "Jazz" poet Quincy Troupe, who stood and delivered his poetry in a staccato style against a backdrop of 16 yards of gold lame. The audience went wild, and twelve new high school students immediately signed up for the Poetry Slam team. Quincy Troupe's wife, Margaret Porter Troupe, declared, "What a terrifically warm and receptive audience, what great attendance! This is just the sort of thing that makes it all worthwhile and really gets the poet/writer to ante up."

Cooke and the organizers hope to keep the reading series alive after the grant winds up this spring with Sherman Alexie, who has volunteered his time to read from his new collection of short stories, *Ten Little Indians*, and meet with a group of Pomo youth who have made a video called "Life on the Rez," which placed at the Sundance Film Festival last year.

The events are free and open to the public, thanks to generous funding from PEN. "The whole community really got behind this," says Robbin Beall, president of the Arena Renaissance Company, which operates the theatre where the live events are held. "After the readings everybody ran across the street and had a pot-luck supper together. I saw Jane Hirshfield learning how to juggle."

The PEN/Bingham Fellowships are awarded to honor the memory of Robert Bingham, a founding editor of the literary magazine Open City, who died shortly after publishing his second book, at the age of XX.

"We've brought together a diverse and passionate audience for good writing in this community," Cooke says. For more information on the Point Arena Project, contact Cooke at <a href="mailto:redtag@mcn.org">redtag@mcn.org</a>

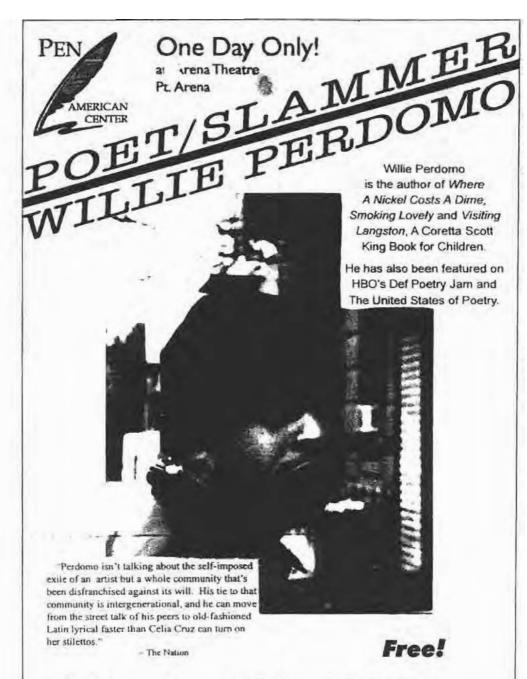
625 words



Free performance Sunday afternoon January 19th at 2:00 o'clock. Free advance tickets to prefered seating and the artists reception before the performance available from artsDesire in Point Arena, the Sea Trader in Gualala and The Music Merchant in Fort Bragg. Call 882-2106 for more information. Sponserd by the PEN American Center, Pacific Community Charter High School and the Arena Reniassance Company.

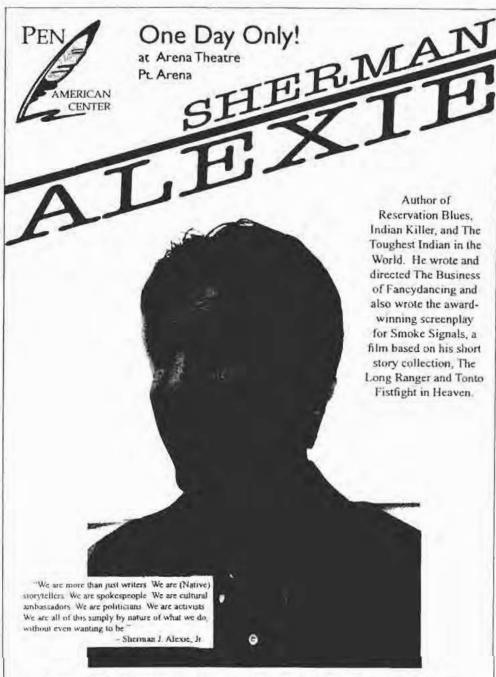


Free performance Sunday afternoon April 6th at 2:00 o clock Free advance tickets to preferred seating and the artist's reception before the performance available from artsDesire in Point Arena, the Sea Trader in Gualala and The Tangent in Fort Bragg. Call 882-2106 for more information. Sponsored by the PEN American Center, Pacific Community Charter High Co. CA 4A-90. Arena Renaissance Company.



### Friday May 14th at 1:15 p.m.

Thanks to generous support from The PEN American Center, Arena Renaissance Comapny and Pacific Community Charter School, this event is FREE and open to the public. Visit www.ArenaTheatre.ORG or call 882-2106 for more information.



On stage Friday afternoon May 28th at 1:15 o'clock. Free advance tickets to preferred seating and the artist's reception before the performance available from artsDesire in Point Arena, the Sea Trader in Gualala Twist in Mendocino and Tangents in Fort Bragg. Visit www.ArenaTheatre.ORG or call 882-2106 for more information. Thanks to generous support from The PEN American Center, Arena Renaissance Comapny and Pacific Community Charter School, these events are FREE and open to the public.



### CALIFORNIA ARTS COUNCIL

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CELEBRATING EXCELLENCE IN THE ARTS SINCE 1976

BARRY HESSENIUS, DIRECTOR

July 15, 2002

Carolyn Cooke 25524 Ten Mile Cutoff, P.O. Box 462 Point Arena, CA 95468

Dear Carolyn:

Congratulations! You were selected to receive an Artists Fellowship Award of \$5,000. Your application was reviewed by a peer review panel, recommended to and approved by our Council. The Artists Fellowship review process is very competitive. We received a total of 254 applications and funded 38 applications (17 awards in Poetry, 9 awards in Fiction, 5 awards in Creative Non Fiction, 7 awards in Spoken Word).

In order to receive your \$5,000 Fellowship Award, follow the instructions below.

- 1. Sign the 3 enclosed contracts and 1 invoice
- Complete the NEA Survey
- 3. Sign and complete the statement of citizenship and Payee Data Record Form
- 4. Submit current resume (artist statement, and black-and-white portrait photograph)
- Mail all documents to:

California Arts Council 1300 I Street, Suite 930 Sacramento, CA 95814

Attn: Kathy Alley, Contract Administrator

We have also enclosed half-tone reproductions of our CAC logo. You can also download a color version of the logo from our web site at <a href="https://www.cac.ca.gov">www.cac.ca.gov</a>. Please include the logo with any documentation material that you produce publicizing your work.

As a Fellowship recipient we require you to submit a brief report on the impact of your award at the end of the contract period. Should you have any questions about the contract process, call Kathy Alley at 916/322-6337. Questions regarding the program, call Theresa Harlan at 916/322-6393. We will also contact you within the grant period to discuss possibilities of promotion. Any upcoming productions or presentations of your work please forward press materials and announcements to both Theresa Harlan (tharlan@caartscouncil.com) and Adam Gottlieb, Director of Communications (agottlieb@caartscouncil.com).

Best wishes for continued success and thank you for furthering the creative spirit in California.

Sincerely.

Gole S. Talamantez, Assistant Chief of Grant Programs The

Theresa Harlan, Artists Fellowship Program

Enclosure: 3 contract copies, invoice, NEA Survey, statement of citizenship, Payer Data Record

1300 | Strift, Suffe 930 | Sacramento, CA 95814 (916) 322-6555 | Fax (916) 322-6575 | www.cacca.gov | cac@cwo.com



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### AN AFFILIATE OF THE CENTER FOR THE BOOK IN THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



The Massachusetts Book Awards honor significant achievements in our contemporary book community.

The second annual Massachusetts Book Awards, recognizing books published in 2001, were named on 3 October 2002, during an awards ceremony at the Worcester Public Library.

### MassBook 2002

Honoring books published in 2001

### Lifetime Achievement Award

Stanley Kunitz

A Life Well-Lived in Poetry

### Award in Fiction

Dennis Lehane, Mystic River Reading and Discussion Guide Prepared by May Lee Tom, Leominster Public Library

Honors in Fiction

Carolyn Cooke, The Bostons

Don Lee, Yellow Reading and Discussion Guide, reprinted from the author's web site

> Margot Livesey, Eva Moves the Furniture Reading Group Guide, reprinted courtesy of Picador USA

### **Award in Nonfiction**

Elisabeth Gitter, The Imprisoned Guest

**Honors in Nonfiction** 

Alex Beam, Gracefully Insane Read an interview with Alex Beam

Madeleine Blais, Uphill Walkers Reading and Discussion Guide Prepared by Linda Kneack, Forbes Library, Northampton

### in Boston, Vacations Definitely Over

### By RICHARD EDER

It has been 10 years or so since the Boston and Maine Railroad carried bassengers as well as freight, and the years since Boston governed taine, then part of Massachusetts. This of an old colonial attitude threststed longer in one respect: the relationship between Mainers in the communities along the coast and the wealthy Boston families who for generations arrived to spend summers on their properties.

In a Brahmin display of no-display, they might call these camps; but even in their scruffy-Oxford, faded-denim, sockless-tennis-shoe and wretched-hat informality, the reedy-voiced men and resonant-voiced women gave off an air of separateness that they would be the last — and those who breathed it, the first — to call superior.

The Mainers who sold them groceries and liquor, repaired their boats and roofs and looked after their places in winter were in no way subservient. If anything, particularly over the last few decades, it was the summer folk the labored to exercise their anxious version of considerateness. They were, in some places (perhaps no longer or only rarely), called the Bostons.

Hence the title of Carolyn Cooke's keen, chilly collection of short stories. Most are about these Bostons, others about the Mainers. Significantly, Ms. Cooke sets the former not in their Maine summers but back in their thinning winter lives. Thinning, mainly, because they are old, failing, poorer and cut off, their Maine sanctuary no more than a memory, not so much nostalgic as uneasy. The three Maine stories, by contrast, deal with characters who are turbulent, struggling and sometimes dangerous.

-It is a divide not just of setting and theme but also of fictional quality. The disorder and passions of the Maine, families may suggest more opportunity for a writer's own engagement and vitality. In fact, though their stories are full of pica-

### ON THE WEB

An online reading group's appraisal of Gao Xingjian's "Soul Mountain," with other literary discussions, is available at The New York Times on the Web:

www.nytlmes.com/books



Peter Dobbins/Houghton Miffle

#### THE BOSTONS

By Carolyn Cooke 180 pages. Houghton Mifflin Company. \$12

resque incident, they seem contrived.

"Dirt-Eaters" tells of a visit to a shiftless backwoods family by relatives who have come up a little and are variously contemptuous and pained by the squalor. In "Girl of Their Dreams," a teenager finds herself unexpectedly excluded when the wild boy she lives with confronts her father. Instead of a fight, the two males bond. "Mourning Party" tells of a wake for the same boy, grown up and now dead; the messy gathering includes two women he lived with, his mother and his father, who is on Thorazine after shooting her

These stories may remind us of Carolyn Chute, but they lack her carnal over-the-edge engagement. They seem written from the outside looking sharply in; almost as if Ms. Cooke herself were a distant relative of the Bostons.

There is nothing contrived about the other stories except their gleaming artfulness. Can there be anything left to write about old Boston where, to drastically paraphrase the old jingle:

The Lowells no longer look to the Cabots nor the Cabots to God, as used to be said. That three-way arrangement moved away years ago to Beverly Farms and Marblehead.

There can be, though. The world changes vertiginously. Dying has become less a matter of leaving the world than of the world leaving you. Ms. Cooke's fading old Bostonians share a puzzlement that lurks in our own more universal calendars.

In "Twa Corbies," Billy returns to Beacon Hill from his suburban retirement community. He is to be sit for his brother Tad while Gay, sister-in-law, goes for her can verdict. Tad has become mental child after a terrible fall.

Billy takes him for a walk, straing him deliberately while crossin truck route; miraculously Tad is hit. The bleak purpose was to estall the looming horror of a help brother with no one to care for his Neither Billy nor we need to be what Gay's doctors had discover that night Billy interrupts her as is about to jump out the window.

"And this was how, having fa to do in my brother, I saved sister-in-law's life, then brushed teeth and went to bed. In the morr I went home to more familiar groand left them as they were." I terrifying stoicism; chillier to moral evil, it is moral solitude.

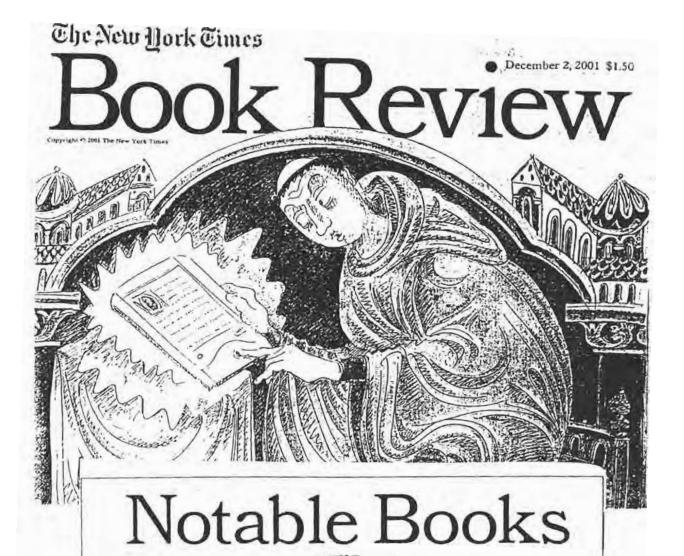
Other Beacon Hill stories port an equivalent bleakness, redeer because Ms. Cooke looks at it fr inside, not outside. If she wrote w out sympathy, her coldness wo not entangle us. If she wrote with coldness, her sympathy would h no bite.

Nowhere is the balance kept ber than in the title story. The Sarge are moving from Beacon Hill to F Pond Village. (Billy lives there to While Martha bustles energetica packing, discarding, sending this for auction, Mr. Sargent sits by window doing his 200th watercolo the State House dome. He has paid all his life; Martha painted fowhile and stopped. She moved now she is ready to move on ag He is marooned, astray.

"He dabbed at his paint tin and upon the white cupola on the lid of dome, the toothpick bars of the wow's walk. Immediately he lost uncomfortable sense of being an man in his body and became all and hand, his hand painting and eye watching the hand, learr from it. The spring in the britaught him where he was."

The Sargents' apartment stripped down. Martha puts out zen dinners or none. Once she rele and makes "his favorite whip berry air pudding, which he took a sign of the strength of her old af tions, as a sign that she had, for n kept the eggbeater." It is a b reprieve in a story that will tharsher.

To a man struggling not to let world leave him, an eggbeater is Virgil wrote of "the tears that ar things." When there are no m things, there are no more tears, weeping turns dry.



This list has been selected from books reviewed since the Holiday Books issue of December 2000. It is meant to suggest some of the high points in this year's fiction and poetry, nonfiction, children's books, mysteries and science fiction. The books are arranged alphabetically under genre headings. The complete reviews of these books may be found at The New York Times on the Webingtimes.com/books.

FICTION & POETRY

THE BOSTONS. By Carolyn Cooke. (Mariner/ Houghton Mifflin, paper, \$12.) A network of connections between these short stories illuminates from more than one point of view a sort of clique of aging, prosperous Bostonians and the rough, unprosperous Maine community where they traditionally spend their summers.